

The World's Classics

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MORE
GHOSTS AND MARVELS

SELECTED BY
V. H. COLLINS

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MORE
GHOSTS AND MARVELS

A SELECTION OF UNCANNY TALES
FROM SIR WALTER SCOTT
TO MICHAEL ARLEN

MADE BY
V. H. COLLINS



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V. H. C.

CONTENTS

SIR WALTER SCOTT, 1771-1832	
The Tapestry Chamber	1
R. S. HAWKER, 1803-75	
The Botathen Ghost	21
EDGAR ALLAN POE, 1809-49	
The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar	36
MRS. GASKELL, 1810-65	
The Old Nurse's Story	50
CHARLES DICKENS, 1812-70	
No. 1 Branch Line: The Signalman	81
J. SHERIDAN LE FANU, 1814-73	
Squire Toby's Will	100
GEORGE MACDONALD, 1824-1904	
The Lady in the Mirror	144
SIR WALTER BESANT (1836-1901) and JAMES RICE (1843-82)	
The Case of Mr. Lucraft	171
HENRY JAMES, 1843-1916	
The Great Good Place	216
F. MARION CRAWFORD, 1854-1909	
The Upper Berth	252
ARTHUR MACHEN, b. 1863	
The Novel of the White Powder	282
H. G. WELLS, b. 1866	
The Door in the Wall	306

E. F. BENSON, b. 1867	
Negotium Perambulans	330
ALGERNON BLACKWOOD, b. 1869	
Running Wolf	351
MAURICE BARING, b. 1874	
Venus	378
LORD DUNSANY, b. 1878	
The Bureau d'Échange de Maux'	392
KATHARINE FULLERTON GEROULD, b. 1879	
Louquier's Third Act	399
JOHN METCALFE, b. 1891	
Nightmare Jack	432
MAY SINCLAIR,	
Where their Fire is not Quenched	458
MICHAEL ARLEN	
The Ancient Sin	487

THE TAPESTRIED CHAMBER

By SIR WALTER SCOTT

ABOUT the end of the American war, when the officers of Lord Cornwallis's army which surrendered at York-town, and others, who had been made prisoners during the impolitic and ill-fated controversy, were returning to their own country, to relate their adventures and repose themselves after their fatigues, there was amongst them a general officer of name of Browne. He was an officer of merit, as well as a gentleman of high consideration for family and attainments.

Some business had carried General Browne upon a tour through the western counties, when, in the conclusion of a morning stage, he found himself in the vicinity of a small country town, which presented a scene of uncommon beauty and of a character peculiarly English.

The little town, with its stately old church whose tower bore testimony to the devotion of ages long past, lay amidst pasture and corn-fields of small extent, but bounded and divided with hedge-row timber of great age and size. There were few marks of modern improvement. The environs of the place intimated neither the solitude of decay, nor the bustle of novelty; the houses were old, but in good repair; and the beautiful little river murmured freely on its way to the left of the town, neither restrained by a dam, nor bordered by a towing-path.

Upon a gentle eminence, nearly a mile to the southward of the town, were seen amongst many venerable oaks and tangled thickets the turrets of a castle, as old as the wars of York and Lancaster, but which seemed to have received important alterations during the age of Elizabeth and her successors. It had not been a place of great size; but whatever accommodation it formerly afforded, was, it must be supposed, still to be obtained within its walls; at least, such was the inference which General Browne drew from observing the smoke arise merrily from several of the ancient wreathed and carved chimney-stalks. The wall of the park ran alongside of the highway for two or three hundred yards; and through the different points by which the eye found glimpses into the woodland scenery, it seemed to be well stocked. Other points of view opened in succession; now a full one, of the front of the old castle, and now a side glimpse at its particular towers; the former rich in all the bizarrerie of the Elizabethan school, while the simple and solid strength of other parts of the building seemed to show that they had been raised more for defence than ostentation.

Delighted with the partial glimpses which he obtained of the castle through the woods and glades by which this ancient feudal fortress was surrounded, our military traveller was determined to inquire whether it might not deserve a nearer view, and whether it contained family pictures or other objects of curiosity worthy of a stranger's visit; when, leaving the vicinity of the park, he rolled through a clean and well-paved street, and stopped at the door of a well-frequented inn.

Before ordering horses to proceed on his journey, General Browne made inquiries concerning the proprietor of the chateau which had so attracted his admiration, and was equally surprised and pleased at hearing in reply a nobleman named whom we shall call Lord Woodville. How fortunate! Much of Browne's early recollections, both at school and at college, had been connected with young Woodville, whom, by a few questions, he now ascertained to be the same with the owner of this fair domain. He had been raised to the peerage by the decease of his father a few months before, and, as the general learned from the landlord, the term of mourning being ended, was now taking possession of his paternal estate in the jovial season of merry autumn, accompanied by a select party of friends to enjoy the sports of a country famous for game.

This was delightful news to our traveller. Frank Woodville had been Richard Browne's fag at Eton, and his chosen intimate at Christ Church; their pleasures and their tasks had been the same; and the honest soldier's heart warmed to find his early friend in possession of so delightful a residence, and of an estate, as the landlord assured him with a nod and a wink, fully adequate to maintain and add to his dignity. Nothing was more natural than that the traveller should suspend a journey, which there was nothing to render hurried, to pay a visit to an old friend under such agreeable circumstances.

The fresh horses, therefore, had only the brief task of conveying the general's travelling carriage to Woodville Castle. A porter admitted them at a

modern Gothic Lodge, built in that style to correspond with the castle itself, and at the same time rang a bell to give warning of the approach of visitors. Apparently the sound of the bell had suspended the separation of the company, bent on the various amusements of the morning; for, on entering the court of the chateau, several young men were lounging about in their sporting dresses, looking at, and criticizing, the dogs which the keepers held in readiness to attend their pastime. As General Browne alighted, the young lord came to the gate of the hall, and for an instant gazed, as at a stranger, upon the countenance of his friend, on which war, with its fatigues and its wounds, had made a great alteration. But the uncertainty lasted no longer than till the visitor had spoken, and the hearty greeting which followed was such as can only be exchanged betwixt those who have passed together merry days of careless boyhood or early youth.

‘If I could have formed a wish, my dear Browne,’ said Lord Woodville, ‘it would have been to have you here, of all men, upon this occasion, which my friends are good enough to hold as a sort of holiday. Do not think you have been unwatched during the years you have been absent from us. I have traced you through your dangers, your triumphs, your misfortunes, and was delighted to see that, whether in victory or defeat, the name of my old friend was always distinguished with applause.’

The general made a suitable reply, and congratulated his friend on his new dignities, and the possession of a place and domain so beautiful.

‘Nay, you have seen nothing of it as yet,’ said

Lord Woodville, 'and I trust you do not mean to leave us till you are better acquainted with it. It is true, I confess, that my present party is pretty large, and the old house, like other places of the kind, does not possess so much accommodation as the extent of the outward walls appears to promise. But we can give you a comfortable old-fashioned room; and I venture to suppose that your campaigns have taught you to be glad of worse quarters.'

The general shrugged his shoulders, and laughed. 'I presume,' he said, 'the worst apartment in your chateau is considerably superior to the old tobacco-cask, in which I was fain to take up my night's lodging when I was in the Bush, as the Virginians call it, with the light corps. There I lay, like Diogenes himself, so delighted with my covering from the elements, that I made a vain attempt to have it rolled on to my next quarters; but my commander for the time would give way to no such luxurious provision, and I took farewell of my beloved cask with tears in my eyes.'

'Well, then, since you do not fear your quarters,' said Lord Woodville, 'you will stay with me a week at least. Of guns, dogs, fishing-rods, flies, and means of sport by sea and land, we have enough and to spare: you cannot pitch on an amusement, but we will pitch on the means of pursuing it. But if you prefer the gun and pointers, I will go with you myself, and see whether you have mended your shooting since you have been amongst the Indians of the back settlements.'

The general gladly accepted his friendly host's proposal in all its points. After a morning of manly exercise, the company met at dinner, where it was

the delight of Lord Woodville to conduce to the display of the high properties of his recovered friend, so as to recommend him to his guests, most of whom were persons of distinction. He led General Browne to speak of the scenes he had witnessed; and as every word marked alike the brave officer and the sensible man, who retained possession of his cool judgement under the most imminent dangers, the company looked upon the soldier with general respect, as on one who had proved himself possessed of an uncommon portion of personal courage—that attribute, of all others, of which everybody desires to be thought possessed.

The day at Woodville Castle ended as usual in such mansions. The hospitality stopped within the limits of good order; music, in which the young lord was a proficient, succeeded to the circulation of the bottle: cards and billiards, for those who preferred such amusements, were in readiness: but the exercise of the morning required early hours, and not long after eleven o'clock the guests began to retire to their several apartments.

The young lord himself conducted his friend, General Browne, to the chamber destined for him, which answered the description he had given of it, being comfortable, but old-fashioned. The bed was of the massive form used in the end of the seventeenth century, and the curtains of faded silk, heavily trimmed with tarnished gold. But then the sheets, pillows, and blankets looked delightful to the campaigner, when he thought of his mansion, the cask. There was an air of gloom in the tapestry hangings, which, with their worn-out graces, curtailed the walls of the little chamber, and gently

undulated as the autumnal breeze found its way through the ancient lattice-window, which pattered and whistled as the air gained entrance. The toilet too, with its mirror, turbaned, after the manner of the beginning of the century, with a coiffure of murrey-coloured silk, and its hundred strange-shaped boxes, providing for arrangements which had been obsolete for more than fifty years, had an antique, and in so far a melancholy, aspect. But nothing could blaze more brightly and cheerfully than the two large wax candles; or if aught could rival them, it was the flaming bickering faggots in the chimney, that sent at once their gleam and their warmth through the snug apartment; which, notwithstanding the general antiquity of its appearance, was not wanting in the least convenience that modern habits rendered either necessary or desirable.

‘This is an old-fashioned sleeping apartment, General,’ said the young lord; ‘but I hope you will find nothing that makes you envy your old tobacco-cask.’

‘I am not particular respecting my lodgings,’ replied the general; ‘yet were I to make any choice, I would prefer this chamber by many degrees, to the gayer and more modern rooms of your family mansion. Believe me that when I unite its modern air of comfort with its venerable antiquity, and recollect that it is your lordship’s property, I shall feel in better quarters here, than if I were in the best hotel London could afford.’

‘I trust—I have no doubt—that you will find yourself as comfortable as I wish you, my dear General,’ said the young nobleman; and once more

bidding his guest good-night, he shook him by the hand and withdrew.

The general again looked round him, and internally congratulating himself on his return to peaceful life, the comforts of which were endeared by the recollection of the hardships and dangers he had lately sustained, undressed himself, and prepared himself for a luxurious night's rest.

Here, contrary to the custom of this species of tale, we leave the general in possession of his apartment until the next morning.

The company assembled for breakfast at an early hour, but without the appearance of General Browne, who seemed the guest that Lord Woodville was desirous of honouring above all whom his hospitality had assembled around him. He more than once expressed surprise at the general's absence, and at length sent a servant to make inquiry after him. The man brought back information that General Browne had been walking abroad since an early hour of the morning, in defiance of the weather, which was misty and ungenial.

'The custom of a soldier,'—said the young nobleman to his friends; 'many of them acquire habitual vigilance, and cannot sleep after the early hour at which their duty usually commands them to be alert.'

Yet the explanation which Lord Woodville thus offered to the company seemed hardly satisfactory to his own mind, and it was in a fit of silence and abstraction that he awaited the return of the general. It took place near an hour after the breakfast bell had rung. He looked fatigued and feverish. His hair, the powdering and arrangement of which

was at this time one of the most important occupations of a man's whole day, and marked his fashion as much as, in the present time, the tying of a cravat or the want of one, was dishevelled, uncurled, void of powder, and dank with dew. His clothes were huddled on with a careless negligence, remarkable in a military man, whose real or supposed duties are usually held to include some attention to the toilet; and his looks were haggard and ghastly in a peculiar degree.

'So you have stölen a march upon us this morning, my dear General,' said Lord Woodville; 'or you have not found your bed so much to your mind as I had hoped and you seemed to expect. How did you rest last night?'

'Oh, excellently well! remarkably well! never better in my life'—said General Browne rapidly, and yet with an air of embarrassment which was obvious to his friend. He then hastily swallowed a cup of tea, and neglecting or refusing whatever else was offered, seemed to fall into a fit of abstraction.

'You will take the gun to-day, General;' said his friend and host, but had to repeat the question twice ere he received the abrupt answer, 'No, my Lord; I am sorry I cannot have the honour of spending another day with your lordship; my post-horses are ordered, and will be here directly.'

All who were present showed surprise, and Lord Woodville immediately replied, 'Post-horses, my good friend! what can you possibly want with them, when you promised to stay with me quietly for at least a week?'

'I believe,' said the general, obviously much

embarrassed, 'that I might, in the pleasure of my first meeting with your lordship, have said something about stopping here a few days; but I have since found it altogether impossible.'

'That is very extraordinary,' answered the young nobleman. 'You seemed quite disengaged yesterday, and you cannot have had a summons to-day; for our post has not come up from the town, and therefore you cannot have received any letters.'

General Browne, without giving any further explanation, muttered something of indispensable business, and insisted on the absolute necessity of his departure in a manner which silenced all opposition on the part of his host, who saw that his resolution was taken, and forbore further importunity.

'At least, however,' he said, 'permit me, my dear Browne, since go you will or must, to show you the view from the terrace, which the mist that is now rising will soon display.'

He threw open a sash window, and stepped down upon the terrace as he spoke. The general followed him mechanically, but seemed little to attend to what his host was saying, as, looking across an extended and rich prospect, he pointed out the different objects worthy of observation. Thus they moved on till Lord Woodville had attained his purpose of drawing his guest entirely apart from the rest of the company, when, turning round upon him with an air of great solemnity, he addressed him thus:

'Richard Browne, my old and very dear friend, we are now alone. Let me conjure you to answer me upon the word of a friend, and the honour of a

soldier. How did you in reality rest during last night?'

'Most wretchedly indeed, my lord,' answered the general, in the same tone of solemnity;—'so miserably, that I would not run the risk of such a second night, not only for all the lands belonging to this castle, but for all the country which I see from this elevated point of view.'

'This is most extraordinary,' said the young lord, as if speaking to himself; 'then there must be something in the reports concerning that apartment.' Again turning to the general, he said, 'For God's sake, my dear friend, be candid with me, and let me know the disagreeable particulars which have befallen you under a roof, where, with consent of the owner, you should have met nothing save comfort.'

The general seemed distressed by this appeal, and paused a moment before he replied. 'My dear lord,' he at length said, 'what happened to me last night is of nature so peculiar and so unpleasant, that I could hardly bring myself to detail it even to your lordship, were it not that, independent of my wish to gratify any request of yours, I think that sincerity on my part may lead to some explanation about a circumstance equally painful and mysterious. To others, the communications I am about to make, might place me in the light of a weak-minded, superstitious fool who suffered his own imagination to delude and bewilder him; but you have known me in childhood and youth, and will not suspect me of having adopted in manhood the feelings and frailties from which my early years were free.' Here he paused, and his friend replied:

'Do not doubt my perfect confidence in the truth

of your communication, however strange it may be,' replied Lord Woodville; 'I know your firmness of disposition too well, to suspect you could be made the object of imposition, and am aware that your honour and your friendship will equally deter you from exaggerating whatever you may have witnessed.'

'Well then,' said the general, 'I will proceed with my story as well as I can, relying upon your candour; and yet distinctly feeling that I would rather face a battery than recall to my mind the odious recollections of last night.'

He paused a second time, and then perceiving that Lord Woodville remained silent and in an attitude of attention, he commenced, though not without obvious reluctance, the history of his night's adventures in the Tapestry Chamber.

'I undressed and went to bed, so soon as your lordship left me yesterday evening; but the wood in the chimney, which nearly fronted my bed, blazed brightly and cheerfully, and, aided by a hundred exciting recollections of my childhood and youth which had been recalled by the unexpected pleasure of meeting your lordship, prevented me from falling immediately asleep. I ought, however, to say, that these reflections were all of a pleasant and agreeable kind, grounded on a sense of having for a time exchanged the labour, fatigues, and dangers of my profession, for the enjoyments of a peaceful life, and the reunion of those friendly and affectionate ties which I had torn asunder at the rude summons of war.'

'While such pleasing reflections were stealing over my mind, and gradually lulling me to slumber, I was suddenly aroused by a sound like that of the

rustling of a silken gown, and the tapping of a pair of high-heeled shoes, as if a woman were walking in the apartment. Ere I could draw the curtain to see what the matter was, the figure of a little woman passed between the bed and the fire. The back of this form was turned to me, and I could observe, from the shoulders and neck, it was that of an old woman, whose dress was an old-fashioned gown which, I think, ladies call a *sacque*; that is, a sort of robe, completely loose in the body, but gathered into broad plaits upon the neck and shoulders, which fall down to the ground, and terminate in a species of train.

‘I thought the intrusion singular enough, but never harboured for a moment the idea that what I saw was anything more than the mortal form of some old woman about the establishment, who had a fancy to dress like her grandmother, and who, having perhaps (as your lordship mentioned that you were rather straitened for room) being dislodged from her chamber for my accommodation, had forgotten the circumstance, and returned by twelve to her old haunt. Under this persuasion I moved myself in bed and coughed a little, to make the intruder sensible of my being in possession of the premises.—She turned slowly round, but gracious heaven! my lord, what a countenance did she display to me! There was no longer any question what she was, or any thought of her being a living being. Upon a face which wore the fixed features of a corpse, were imprinted the traces of the vilest and most hideous passions which had animated her while she lived. The body of some atrocious criminal seemed to have been given up from the

grave, and the soul restored from the penal fire, in order to form, for a space, a union with the ancient accomplice of its guilt. I started up in bed, and sat upright, supporting myself on my palms, as I gazed on this horrible spectre. The hag made, as it seemed, a single and swift stride to the bed where I lay, and squatted herself down upon it, in precisely the same attitude which I had assumed in the extremity of horror, advancing her diabolical countenance within half a yard of mine, with a grin which seemed to intimate the malice and the derision of an incarnate fiend.'

Here General Browne stopped, and wiped from his brow the cold perspiration with which the recollection of his horrible vision had covered it.

'My lord,' he said, 'I am no coward. I have been in all the mortal dangers incidental to my profession, and I may truly boast that no man ever knew Richard Browne dishonour the sword he wears; but in these horrible circumstances, under the eyes, and as it seemed, almost in the grasp of an incarnation of an evil spirit, all firmness forsook me, all manhood melted from me like wax in the furnace, and I felt my hair individually bristle. The current of my life-blood ceased to flow, and I sank back in a swoon, as very a victim to panic terror as ever was a village girl or a child of ten years old. How long I lay in this condition I cannot pretend to guess.

'But I was roused by the castle clock striking one, so loud that it seemed as if it were in the very room. It was some time before I dared open my eyes, lest they should again encounter the horrible spectacle. When, however, I summoned courage

to look up, she was no longer visible. My first idea was to pull my bell, wake the servants, and remove to a garret or a hay-loft, to be ensured against a second visitation. Nay, I will confess the truth, that my resolution was altered, not by the shame of exposing myself, but by the very fear that, as the bell-cord hung by the chimney, I might, in making my way to it, be again crossed by the fiendish hag, who, I figured to myself, might be still lurking about some corner of the apartment.

'I will not pretend to describe what hot and cold fever-fits tormented me for the rest of the night, through broken sleep, weary vigils, and that dubious state which forms the neutral ground between them. A hundred terrible objects appeared to haunt me; but there was the great difference betwixt the vision which I have described, and those which followed, that I knew the last to be deceptions of my own fancy and over-excited nerves.

'Day at last appeared, and I rose from my bed ill in health, and humiliated in mind. I was ashamed of myself as a man and a soldier, and still more so, at feeling my own extreme desire to escape from the haunted apartment, which, however, conquered all other considerations; so that, huddling on my clothes with the most careless haste, I made my escape from your lordship's mansion, to seek in the open air some relief to my nervous system, shaken as it was by this horrible rencounter with a visitant, for such I must believe her, from the other world. Your lordship has now heard the cause of my discomposure, and of my sudden desire to leave your hospitable castle. In other places I trust we may often meet; but God protect

me from ever spending a second night under that roof!'

Strange as the general's tale was, he spoke with such a deep air of conviction, that it cut short all the usual commentaries which are made on such stories. Lord Woodville never once asked him if he was sure he did not dream of the apparition, or suggested any of the possibilities by which it is fashionable to explain supernatural appearances, as wild vagaries of the fancy or deceptions of the optic nerves. On the contrary he seemed deeply impressed with the truth and reality of what he had heard; and, after a considerable pause, regretted, with much appearance of sincerity, that his early friend should in his house have suffered so severely.

'I am the more sorry for your pain, my dear Browne,' he continued, 'that it is the unhappy, though most unexpected, result of an experiment of my own! You must know, that for my father and grandfather's time, at least, the apartment which was assigned to you last night had been shut on account of reports that it was disturbed by supernatural sights and noises. When I came, a few weeks since, into possession of the estate, I thought the accommodation which the castle afforded for my friends was not extensive enough to permit the inhabitants of the invisible world to retain possession of a comfortable sleeping apartment. I therefore caused the Tapestried Chamber, as we call it, to be opened; and without destroying its air of antiquity, I had such new articles of furniture placed in it as became the modern times. Yet as the opinion that the room was haunted very strongly prevailed among the domestics, and was

also known in the neighbourhood and to many of my friends, I feared some prejudice might be entertained by the first occupant of the Tapestried Chamber, which might tend to revive the evil report which it had laboured under, and so disappoint my purpose of rendering it a useful part of the house. I must confess, my dear Browne, that your arrival yesterday, agreeable to me for a thousand reasons besides, seemed the most favourable opportunity of removing the unpleasant rumours which attached to the room, since your courage was indubitable and your mind free of any preoccupation on the subject. I could not, therefore, have chosen a more fitting subject for my experiment.'

'Upon my life,' said General Browne, somewhat hastily, 'I am infinitely obliged to your lordship—very particularly indebted indeed. I am likely to remember for some time the consequences of the experiment, as your lordship is pleased to call it.'

'Nay, now you are unjust, my dear friend,' said Lord Woodville. 'You have only to reflect for a single moment, in order to be convinced that I could not augur the possibility of the pain to which you have been so unhappily exposed. I was yesterday morning a complete sceptic on the subject of supernatural appearances. Nay, I am sure that had I told you what was said about that room, those very reports would have induced you, by your own choice, to select it for your accommodation. It was my misfortune, perhaps my error, but really cannot be termed my fault, that you have been afflicted so strangely.'

'Strangely indeed!' said the general, resuming his good temper; 'and I acknowledge that I have

no right to be offended with your lordship for treating me like what I used to think myself—a man of some firmness and courage.—But I see my post-horses are arrived, and I must not detain your lordship from your amusement.’

‘Nay, my old friend,’ said Lord Woodville, ‘since you cannot stay with us another day, which, indeed, I can no longer urge, give me at least half an hour more. You used to love pictures, and I have a gallery of portraits, some of them by Vandyke, representing ancestry to whom this property and castle formerly belonged. I think that several of them will strike you as possessing merit.’

General Browne accepted the invitation, though somewhat unwillingly. It was evident he was not to breathe freely or at ease until he left Woodville Castle far behind him. He could not refuse his friend’s invitation, however; and the less so, that he was a little ashamed of the peevishness which he had displayed towards his well-meaning entertainer.

The general, therefore, followed Lord Woodville through several rooms, into a long gallery hung with pictures, which the latter pointed out to his guest, telling the names, and giving some account of the personages whose portraits presented themselves in progression. General Browne was but little interested in the details which these accounts conveyed to him. They were, indeed, of the kind which are usually found in the old family gallery. Here was a cavalier who had ruined the estate in the royal cause; there a fine lady who had reinstated it by contracting a match with a wealthy Round-head. There hung a gallant who had been in danger

for corresponding with the exiled Court of St. Germain's; here one who had taken arms for William at the Revolution; and there a third that had thrown his weight alternately into the scale of Whig and Tory.

While Lord Woodville was cramming these words into his guest's ear, 'against the stomach of his sense,' they gained the middle of the gallery, when he beheld General Browne suddenly start, and assume an attitude of the utmost surprise, not unmixed with fear, as his eyes were caught and suddenly riveted by a portrait of an old lady in a sacque, the fashionable dress of the end of the seventeenth century.

'There she is!' he exclaimed; 'there she is, in form and features, though inferior in demoniac expression to the accursed hag who visited me last night!'

'If that be the case,' said the young nobleman, 'there can remain no longer any doubt of the horrible reality of your apparition. That is the picture of a wretched ancestress of mine, of whose crimes a black and fearful catalogue is recorded in a family history in my charter-chest. The recital of them would be too horrible; it is enough to say, that in yon fatal apartment incest and unnatural murder were committed. I will restore it to the solitude to which the better judgement of those who preceded me had consigned it; and never shall any one, so long as I can prevent it, be exposed to a repetition of the supernatural horrors which could shake such courage as yours.'

Thus the friends, who had met with such glee, parted in a very different mood; Lord Woodville

to command the Tapestryed Chamber to be unmantled and the door built up; and General Browne to seek in some less beautiful country, and with some less dignified friend, forgetfulness of the painful night which he had passed in Woodville Castle.

THE BOTATHEN GHOST

By R. S. HAWKER

THERE was something very painful and peculiar in the position of the clergy in the west of England throughout the seventeenth century. The Church of those days was in a transitory state, and her ministers, like her formularies, embodied a strange mixture of the old belief with the new interpretation. Their wide severance also from the great metropolis of life and manners, the city of London (which in those times was civilized England, much as the Paris of our own day is France), divested the Cornish clergy in particular of all personal access to the master-minds of their age and body. Then, too, the barrier interposed by the rude rough roads of their country, and by their abode in wilds that were almost inaccessible, rendered the existence of a bishop rather a doctrine suggested to their belief than a fact revealed to the actual vision of each in his generation. Hence it came to pass that the Cornish clergyman, insulated within his own limited sphere, often without even the presence of a country squire (and unchecked by the influence of the Fourth Estate—for until the beginning of this nineteenth century, *Flindell's Weekly Miscellany*, distributed from house to house from the pannier of a mule, was the only light of the West), became developed about middle life into an original mind and man, sole and absolute within his parish boundary, eccentric when compared with his brethren

in civilised regions, and yet, in German phrase, 'a whole and seldom man' in his dominion of souls. He was 'the parson,' in canonical phrase—that is to say, The Person, the somebody of consequence among his own people. These men were not, however, smoothed down into a monotonous aspect of life and manners by this remote and secluded existence. They imbibed, each in his own peculiar circle, the hue of surrounding objects, and were tinged into a distinctive colouring and character by many a contrast of scenery and people. There was the 'light of other days,' the curate by the sea-shore, who professed to check the turbulence of the 'smugglers' landing' by his presence on the sands, and who 'held the lantern' for the guidance of his flock when the nights were dark, as the only proper ecclesiastical part he could take in the proceedings. He was soothed and silenced by the gift of a keg of hollands or a chest of tea. There was the merry minister of the mines, whose cure was honey-combed by the underground men. He must needs have been artist and poet in his way, for he had to enliven his people three or four times a-year, by mastering the arrangements of a 'guary,' or religious mystery, which was duly performed in the topmost hollow of a green barrow or hill, of which many survive, scooped out into vast amphitheatres and surrounded by benches of turf which held two thousand spectators. Such were the historic plays, 'The Creation' and 'Noe's Flood,' which still exist in the original Celtic as well as the English text, and suggest what critics and antiquaries these Cornish curates, masters of such revels, must have been—for the native language of Cornwall did not

lapse into silence until the end of the seventeenth century. Then, moreover, here and there would be one parson more learned than his kind in the mysteries of a deep and thrilling lore of peculiar fascination. He was a man so highly honoured at college for natural gifts and knowledge of learned books which nobody else could read, that when he 'took his second orders' the bishop gave him a mantle of scarlet silk to wear upon his shoulders in church, and his lordship had put such power into it that, when the parson had it rightly on, he could 'govern any ghost or evil spirit,' and even 'stop an earthquake.'

Such a powerful minister, in combat with supernatural visitations, was one Parson Rudall, of Launceston, whose existence and exploits we gather from the local tradition of his time, from surviving letters and other memoranda, and indeed from his own 'diurnal' which fell by chance into the hands of the present writer. Indeed the legend of Parson Rudall and the Botathen Ghost will be recognised by many Cornish people as a local remembrance of their boyhood.

It appears, then, from the diary of this learned master of the grammar school—for such was his office as well as perpetual curate of the parish—that a pestilential disease did break forth in our town in the beginning of the year A.D. 1665; yea, and it likewise invaded my school, insomuch that therewithal certain of the chief scholars sickened and died.' 'Among others who yielded to the malign influence was Master John Eliot, the eldest son and the worshipful heir of Edward Eliot, Esquire, of Trebursey, a stripling of sixteen years

of age, but of uncommon parts and hopeful ingenuity. At his own especial motion and earnest desire I did consent to preach his funeral sermon.' It should be remembered here that, howsoever strange and singular it may sound to us that a mere lad should formally solicit such a performance, at the hands of his master, it was in consonance with the habitual usage of those times. The old services for the dead had been abolished by law, and in the stead of sacrament and ceremony, month's mind and year's mind, the sole substitute which survived was the general desire 'to partake,' as they called it, of a posthumous discourse, replete with lofty eulogy and flattering remembrance of the living and the dead. The diary proceeds :—

'I fulfilled my undertaking, and preached over the coffin in the presence of a full assemblage of mourners and lachrymose friends. An ancient gentleman, who was then and there in the church, a Mr. Bligh, of Botathen, was much affected with my discourse, and he was heard to repeat to himself certain parentheses therefrom, especially a phrase from Maro Virgilius, which I had applied to the deceased youth, "*Et puer ipse fuit cantari dignus.*"

'The cause wherefore this old gentleman was moved by my applications was this: He had a first-born and only son—a child who, but a very few months before, had been not unworthy the character I drew of young Master Eliot, but who, by some strange accident, had of late quite fallen away from his parent's hopes, and become moody, and sullen, and distraught. When the funeral obsequies were over, I had no sooner come out of church than I was accosted by this aged parent, and he besought me

incontinently, with a singular energy, that I would resort with him forthwith to his abode at Botathen that very night; nor could I have delivered myself from his importunity, had not Mr. Eliot urged his claim to enjoy my company at his own house. Hereupon I got loose, but not until I had pledged a fast assurance that I would pay him, faithfully, an early visit the next day.'

'The Place,' as it was called, of Botathen, where old Mr. Bligh resided, was a low-roofed gabled manor-house of the fifteenth century, walled and mullioned, and with clustered chimneys of dark-grey stone from the neighbouring quarries of Venter-gan. The mansion was flanked by a pleasance or enclosure in one space, of garden and lawn, and it was surrounded by a solemn grove of stag-horned trees. It had the sombre aspect of age and of solitude, and looked the very scene of strange and supernatural events. A legend might well belong to every gloomy glade around, and there must surely be a haunted room somewhere within its walls. Hither, according to his appointment, on the morrow, Parson Rudall betook himself. Another clergyman, as it appeared, had been invited to meet him, who, very soon after his arrival, proposed a walk together in the pleasance, on the pretext of showing him, as a stranger, the walks and trees, until the dinner-bell should strike. There, with much proximity, and with many a solemn pause, his brother minister proceeded to 'unfold the mystery.'

A singular infelicity, he declared, had befallen young Master Bligh, once the hopeful heir of his parents and of the lands of Botathen. Whereas he

had been from childhood a blithe and merry boy, 'the gladness,' like Isaac of old, of his father's age, he had suddenly, and of late, become morose and silent—nay, even austere and stern—dwelling apart, always solemn, often in tears. The lad had at first repulsed all questions as to the origin of this great change, but of late he had yielded to the importune researches of his parents, and had disclosed the secret cause. It appeared that he resorted every day, by a pathway across the fields, to this very clergyman's house, who had charge of his education, and grounded him in the studies suitable to his age. In the course of his daily walk he had to pass a certain heath or down where the road wound along through tall blocks of granite with open spaces of grassy sward between. There in a certain spot, and always in one and the same place, the lad declared that he encountered, every day, a woman with a pale and troubled face, clothed in a long loose garment of frieze, with one hand always stretched forth, and the other pressed against her side. Her name, he said, was Dorothy Dingle, for he had known her well from his childhood, and she often used to come to his parents' house; but that which troubled him was, that she had now been dead three years, and he himself had been with the neighbours at her burial; so that, as the youth alleged, with great simplicity, since he had seen her body laid in the grave, this that he saw every day must needs be her soul or ghost. 'Questioned again and again,' said the clergyman, 'he never contradicts himself; but he relates the same and the simple tale as a thing that cannot be gainsaid. Indeed, the lad's observance is keen and

calm for a boy of his age. The hair of the appearance, sayeth he, is not like anything alive, but it is so soft and light that it seemeth to melt away while you look; but her eyes are set, and never blink—no, not when the sun shineth full upon her face. She maketh no steps, but seemeth to swim along the top of the grass; and her hand, which is stretched out alway, seemeth to point at something far away, out of sight. It is her continual coming; for she never faileth to meet him, and to pass on, that hath quenched his spirits; and although he never seeth her by night, yet cannot he get his natural rest.’

‘Thus far the clergyman; whereupon the dinner-clock did sound, and we went into the house. After dinner, when young Master Bligh had withdrawn with his tutor, under excuse of their books, the parents did forthwith beset me as to my thoughts about their son. Said I, warily, “The case is strange but by no means impossible. It is one that I will study, and fear not to handle, if the lad will be free with me, and fulfil all that I desire.” The mother was overjoyed, but I perceived that old Mr. Bligh turned pale, and was downcast with some thought which, however, he did not express. Then they bade that Master Bligh should be called to meet me in the pleasance forthwith. The boy came, and he rehearsed to me his tale with an open countenance, and, withal, a pretty modesty of speech. Verily he seemed *ingenui vultus puer ingenuique pudoris*. Then I signified to him my purpose. “To-morrow,” said I, “we will go together to the place; and if, as I doubt not, the woman shall appear, it will be for me to proceed according to knowledge, and by rules laid down in my books.”’

The unaltered scenery of the legend still survives, and, like the field of the forty footsteps in another history, the place is still visited by those who take interest in the supernatural tales of old. The path-way leads along a moorland waste, where large masses of rock stand up here and there from the grassy turf, and clumps of heath and gorse weave their tapestry of golden and purple garniture on every side. Amidst all these, and winding along between the rocks, is a natural footway worn by the scant, rare tread of the village traveller. Just midway, a somewhat larger stretch than usual of green sod expands, which is skirted by the path, and which is still identified as the legendary haunt of the phantom, by the name of Parson Rudall's Ghost.

But we must draw the record of the first interview between the minister and Dorothy from his own words. 'We met,' thus he writes, 'in the pleasure very early, and before any others in the house were awake; and together the lad and myself proceeded towards the field. The youth was quite composed, and carried his Bible under his arm, from whence he read to me verses, which he said he had lately picked out, to have always in his mind. These were Job vii. 14, "Thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me through visions;" and Deuteronomy xxviii. 67, "In the morning thou shalt say, Would to God it were evening, and in the evening thou shalt say, Would to God it were morning; for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see."

'I was much pleased with the lad's ingenuity in

these pious applications, but for mine own part I was somewhat anxious and out of cheer. For aught I knew this might be a *dæmonium meridianum*, the most stubborn spirit to govern and guide that any man can meet, and the most perilous withal. We had hardly reached the accustomed spot, when we both saw her at once gliding towards us; punctually as the ancient writers describe the motion of their "lemures, which swoon along the ground, neither marking the sand nor bending the herbage." The aspect of the woman was exactly that which had been related by the lad. There was the pale and stony face, the strange and misty hair, the eyes firm and fixed, that gazed, yet not on us, but on something that they saw far, far away; one hand and arm stretched out, and the other grasping the girdle of her waist. She floated along the field like a sail upon a stream, and glided past the spot where we stood, pausingly. But so deep was the awe that overcame me, as I stood there in the light of day, face to face with a human soul separate from her bones and flesh, that my heart and purpose both failed me. I had resolved to speak to the spectre in the appointed form of words, but I did not. I stood like one amazed and speechless, until she had passed clean out of sight. One thing remarkable came to pass. A spaniel dog, the favourite of young Master Bligh, had followed us, and lo! when the woman drew nigh, the poor creature began to yell and bark piteously, and ran backward and away, like a thing dismayed and appalled. We returned to the house, and after I had said all that I could to pacify the lad, and to soothe the aged people, I took my leave for that time, with a

promise that when I had fulfilled certain business elsewhere, which I then alleged, I would return and take orders to assuage these disturbances and their cause.

'*January 7, 1665.*—At my own house, I find, by my books, what is expedient to be done; and then Apage, Sathanas!

'*January 9, 1665.*—This day I took leave of my wife and family, under pretext of engagements elsewhere, and made my secret journey to our diocesan city, wherein the good and venerable bishop then abode.

'*January 10.*—*Deo gratias*, in safe arrival in Exeter; craved and obtained immediate audience of his lordship; pleading it was for counsel and admonition on a weighty and pressing cause; called to the presence; made obeisance; then and by command stated my case—the Botathen perplexity—which I moved with strong and earnest instances and solemn asseverations of that which I had myself seen and heard. Demanded by his lordship, what was the succour that I had come to entreat at his hands. Replied, licence for my exorcism, that so I might, ministerially, allay this spiritual visitant, and thus render to the living and the dead release from this surprise. "But," said our bishop, "on what authority do you allege that I am entrusted with faculty so to do? Our Church, as is well known, hath abjured certain branches of her ancient power, on grounds of perversion and abuse." "Nay, my lord," I humbly answered, "under favour, the seventy-second of the canons ratified and enjoined on us, the clergy, anno Domini 1604, doth expressly provide, that 'no minister, *unless he*

hath the licence of his diocesan bishop, shall essay to exorcise a spirit, evil or good.' Therefore it was," I did here mildly allege, "that I did not presume to enter on such a work without lawful privilege under your lordship's hand and seal." Hereupon did our wise and learned bishop, sitting in his chair, condescend upon the theme at some length with many gracious interpretations from ancient writers and from Holy Scriptures, and I did humbly rejoin and reply, till the upshot was that he did call in his secretary and command him to draw the aforesaid faculty, forthwith and without further delay, assigning him a form, insomuch that the matter was incontinently done; and after I had disbursed into the secretary's hands certain moneys for signitary purposes, as the manner of such officers hath always been, the bishop did himself affix his signature under the *sigillum* of his see, and deliver the document into my hands. When I knelt down to receive his benediction, he softly said, "Let it be secret, Mr. R. Weak brethren! weak brethren!"

This interview with the bishop, and the success with which he vanquished his lordship's scruples, would seem to have confirmed Parson Rudall very strongly in his own esteem, and to have invested him with that courage which he evidently lacked at his first encounter with the ghost.

The entries proceed: '*January 11, 1665.*—Therewithal did I hasten home and prepare my instruments, and cast my figures for the onset of the next day. Took out my ring of brass, and put it on the index-finger of my right hand, with the *scutum Davidis* traced thereon.

'*January 12, 1665.*—Rode into the gateway at

Botathen, armed at all points, but not with Saul's armour, and ready. There is danger from the demons, but so there is in the surrounding air every day. At early morning then, and alone—for so the usage ordains—I betook me towards the field. It was void, and I had thereby due time to prepare. First I paced and measured out my circle on the grass. Then I did mark my pentacle in the very midst, and at the intersection of the five angles I did set up and fix my crutch of *raun* [rowan]. Lastly, I took my station south, at the true line of the meridian, and stood facing due north. I waited and watched for a long time. At last there was a kind of trouble in the air, a soft and rippling sound, and all at once the shape appeared, and came on towards me gradually. I opened my parchment-scroll, and read aloud the command. She paused, and seemed to waver and doubt ; stood still; then I rehearsed the sentence again, sounding out every syllable like a chant. She drew near my ring, but halted at first outside, on the brink. I sounded again, and now at the third time I gave the signal in Syriac—the speech which is used, they say, where such ones dwell and converse in thoughts that glide.

'She was at last obedient, and swam into the midst of the circle, and there stood still, suddenly. I saw, moreover, that she drew back her pointing hand. All this while I do confess that my knees shook under me, and the drops of sweat ran down my flesh like rain. But now, although face to face with the spirit, my heart grew calm, and my mind was composed. I knew that the pentacle would govern her, and the ring must bind, until I gave the

word. Then I called to mind the rule laid down of old, that no angel or fiend, no spirit, good or evil, will ever speak until they have been first spoken to. *N.B.*—This is the great law of prayer. God Himself will not yield reply until man hath made vocal entreaty, once and again. So I went on to demand, as the books advise; and the phantom made answer, willingly. Questioned wherefore not at rest. Unquiet, because of a certain sin. Asked what, and by whom. Revealed it; but it is *sub sigillo*, and therefore *nefas dictu*; more anon. Inquired, what sign she could give that she was a true spirit and not a false fiend. Stated, before next Yule-tide a fearful pestilence would lay waste the land and myriads of souls would be loosened from their flesh, until, as she piteously said, “our valleys will be full.” Asked again, why she so terrified the lad. Replied: “It is the law: we must seek a youth or a maiden of clean life, and under age, to receive messages and admonitions.” We conversed with many more words, but it is not lawful for me to set them down. Pen and ink would degrade and defile the thoughts she uttered, and which my mind received that day. I broke the ring and she passed, but to return once more next day. At even-song, a long discourse with that ancient transgressor, Mr. B. Great horror and remorse; entire atonement and penance; whatsoever I enjoin; full acknowledgment before pardon.

‘*January 13, 1665.*—At sunrise I was again in the field. She came in at once, and, as it seemed, with freedom. Inquired if she knew my thoughts, and what I was going to relate? Answered, “Nay, we only know what we perceive and hear; we cannot see the heart.” Then I rehearsed the penitent words

of the man she had come up to denounce, and the satisfaction he would perform. Then said she, "Peace in our midst." I went through the proper forms of dismissal, and fulfilled all as it was set down and written in my memoranda; and then, with certain fixed rites, I did dismiss that troubled ghost, until she peacefully withdrew, gliding towards the west. Neither did she ever afterward appear, but was allayed until she shall come in her second flesh to the valley of Armageddon on the last day.'

These quaint and curious details from the 'diurnal' of a simple-hearted clergyman of the seventeenth century appear to betoken his personal persuasion of the truth of what he saw and said, although the statements are strongly tinged with what some may term the superstition, and others the excessive belief, of those times. It is a singular fact, however, that the canon which authorises exorcism under episcopal licence is still a part of the ecclesiastical law of the Anglican Church, although it might have a singular effect on the nerves of certain of our bishops if their clergy were to resort to them for the faculty which Parson Rudall obtained. The general facts stated in his diary are to this day matters of belief in that neighbourhood; and it has been always accounted a strong proof of the veracity of the Parson and the Ghost, that the plague, fatal to so many thousands, did break out in London at the close of that very year. We may well excuse a triumphant entry, on a subsequent page of the 'diurnal,' with the date of July 10, 1665: 'How sorely must the infidels and heretics of this generation be dismayed when they

know that this Black Death, which is now swallowing its thousands in the streets of the great city, was foretold six months ago, under the exorcisms of a country minister, by a visible and suppliant ghost! And what pleasures and improvements do such deny themselves who scorn and avoid all opportunity of intercourse with souls separate, and the spirits, glad and sorrowful, which inhabit the unseen world!'



THE FACTS IN THE CASE OF M. VALDEMAR

By EDGAR ALLAN POE

OF course I shall not pretend to consider it any matter for wonder that the extraordinary case of M. Valdemar has excited discussion. It would have been a miracle had it not—especially under the circumstances. Through the desire of all parties concerned to keep the affair from the public, at least for the present, or until we had further opportunities for investigation—through our endeavours to effect this—a garbled or exaggerated account made its way into society, and became the source of many unpleasant misrepresentations; and, very naturally, of a great deal of disbelief.

It is now rendered necessary that I give the *facts*—as far as I comprehend them myself. They are, succinctly, these:—

My attention, for the last three years, had been repeatedly drawn to the subject of mesmerism; and, about nine months ago, it occurred to me, quite suddenly, that in the series of experiments made hitherto, there had been a very remarkable and most unaccountable omission—no person had as yet been mesmerised *in articulo mortis*. It remained to be seen, first, whether, in such condition, there existed in the patient any susceptibility to the magnetic influence; secondly, whether, if any existed, it was impaired or increased by the con-

dition; thirdly, to what extent, or for how long a period, the encroachments of Death might be arrested by the process. There were other points to be ascertained, but these most excited my curiosity—the last in especial, from the immensely important character of its consequences.

In looking around me for some subject by whose means I might test these particulars, I was brought to think of my friend, M. Ernest Valdemar, the well-known compiler of the *Bibliotheca Forensica*, and author (under the *nom de plume* of Issachar Marx) of the Polish versions of *Wallenstein* and *Gargantua*. M. Valdemar, who has resided principally at Harlem, N.Y., since the year 1839, is (or was) particularly noticeable for the extreme spareness of his person—his lower limbs much resembling those of John Randolph; and, also, for the whiteness of his whiskers, in violent contrast to the blackness of his hair—the latter in consequence being very generally mistaken for a wig. His temperament was markedly nervous, and rendered him a good subject for mesmeric experiment. On two or three occasions I had put him to sleep with little difficulty, but was disappointed in other results which his peculiar constitution had naturally led me to anticipate. His will was at no period positively, or thoroughly, under my control; and in regard to clairvoyance, I could accomplish with him nothing to be relied upon. I always attributed my failure at these points to the disordered state of his health. For some months previous to my becoming acquainted with him, his physicians had declared him in a confirmed phthisis. It was his custom, indeed, to speak calmly of his approaching

dissolution, as of a matter neither to be avoided nor regretted.

When the ideas to which I have alluded first occurred to me, it was of course very natural that I should think of M. Valdemar. I knew the steady philosophy of the man too well to apprehend any scruples from *him*; and he had no relatives in America who would be likely to interfere. I spoke to him frankly upon the subject; and, to my surprise, his interest seemed vividly excited. I say to my surprise; for, although he had always yielded his person freely to my experiments, he had never before given me any tokens of sympathy with what I did. His disease was of that character which would admit of exact calculation in respect to the epoch of its termination in death; and it was finally arranged between us that he would send for me about twenty-four hours before the period announced by his physicians as that of his decease.

It is now rather more than seven months since I received from M. Valdemar himself the subjoined note:—

‘MY DEAR P——, You may as well come *now*. D—— and F—— are agreed that I cannot hold out beyond to-morrow midnight; and I think they have hit the time very nearly. VALDEMAR.’

I received this note within half-an-hour after it was written, and in fifteen minutes more I was in the dying man’s chamber. I had not seen him for ten days, and was appalled by the fearful alteration which the brief interval had wrought in him. His face wore a leaden hue; the eyes were utterly lustreless; and the emaciation was so extreme, that the skin had been broken through by the cheek-

bones. His expectoration was excessive. The pulse was barely perceptible. He retained, nevertheless, in a very remarkable manner, both his mental power and certain degree of physical strength. He spoke with distinctness—took some palliative medicines without aid—and, when I entered the room, was occupied in pencilling memoranda in a pocket book. He was propped up in the bed by pillows. Doctors D—— and F—— were in attendance. After pressing Valdemar's hand, I took these gentlemen aside, and obtained from them a minute account of the patient's condition. The left lung had been for eighteen months in a semi-osseous or cartilaginous state, and was, of course, entirely useless for all purposes of vitality. The right, in its upper portion, was also partially, if not thoroughly, ossified, while the lower region was merely a mass of purulent tubercles, running into one another. Several extensive perforations existed; and, at one point, permanent adhesion to the ribs had taken place. These appearances in the right lobe were of comparatively recent date. The ossification had proceeded with very unusual rapidity; no sign of it had been discovered a month before, and the adhesion had only been observed during the three previous days. Independently of the phthisis, the patient was suspected of aneurism of the aorta; but on this point the osseous symptoms rendered an exact diagnosis impossible. It was the opinion of both physicians that M. Valdemar would die about midnight on the morrow (Sunday). It was then seven o'clock on Saturday evening.

On quitting the invalid's bedside to hold conversation with myself, Doctors D—— and F—— had

bidden him a final farewell. It had not been their intention to return; but, at my request, they agreed to look in upon the patient about ten the next night.

When they had gone I spoke freely with M. Valdemar on the subject of his approaching dissolution, as well as, more particularly, of the experiment proposed. He still professed himself willing and even anxious to have it made, and urged me to commence it at once. A male and a female nurse were in attendance; but I did not feel myself altogether at liberty to engage in a task of this character with no more reliable witnesses than these people, in case of sudden accident, might prove. I therefore postponed operations until about eight the next night when the arrival of a medical student, with whom I had some acquaintance (Mr. Theodore L——l), relieved me from further embarrassment. It had been my design, originally, to wait for the physicians; but I was induced to proceed, first by the urgent entreaties of M. Valdemar, and secondly, by my conviction that I had not a moment to lose, as he was evidently sinking fast.

Mr. L——l was so kind as to accede to my desire that he would take notes of all that occurred; and it is from his memoranda that what I now have to relate is, for the most part, either condensed or copied *verbatim*.

It wanted about five minutes of eight when, taking the patient's hand, I begged him to state, as distinctly as he could, to Mr. L——l, whether he (M. Valdemar) was entirely willing that I should make the experiment of mesmerising him in his then condition.

He replied feebly, yet quite audibly, 'Yes, I wish to be mesmerised'—adding immediately afterwards 'I fear you have deferred it too long.'

While he spoke thus, I commenced the passes which I had already found most effectual in subduing him. He was evidently influenced with the first lateral stroke of my hand across his forehead; but although I exerted all my powers, no further perceptible effect was induced until some minutes after ten o'clock, when Doctors D—— and F—— called, according to appointment. I explained to them, in a few words, what I designed, and as they opposed no objection, saying that the patient was already in the death agony, I proceeded without hesitation—exchanging, however, the lateral passes for downwards ones, and directing my gaze entirely into the right eye of the sufferer.

By this time his pulse was imperceptible and his breathing was stertorous, and at intervals of half a minute.

This condition was nearly unaltered for a quarter of an hour. At the expiration of this period, however, a natural, although a very deep sigh, escaped the bosom of the dying man, and the stertorous breathing ceased—that is to say, its stertorousness was no longer apparent; the intervals were undiminished. The patient's extremities were of an icy coldness.

At five minutes before eleven I perceived unequivocal signs of mesmeric influence: The glassy roll of the eye was changed for that expression of uneasy *inward* examination which is never seen except in cases of sleep-waking, and which it is quite impossible to mistake. With a few rapid

lateral passes I made the lids quiver, as in incipient sleep, and with a few more I closed them altogether. I was not satisfied, however, with this, but continued the manipulations vigorously, and with the fullest exertion of the will, until I had completely stiffened the limbs of the slumberer, after placing them in a seemingly easy position. The legs were at full length; the arms were nearly so, and reposed on the bed at a moderate distance from the loins. The head was very slightly elevated.

When I had accomplished this, it was fully midnight, and I requested the gentlemen present to examine M. Valdemar's condition. After a few experiments, they admitted him to be in an unusually perfect state of mesmeric trance. The curiosity of both the physicians was greatly excited. Dr. D—— resolved at once to remain with the patient all night, while Dr. F—— took leave with a promise to return at daybreak. Mr. L—— and the nurses remained.

We left M. Valdemar entirely undisturbed until about three o'clock in the morning, when I approached him, and found him in precisely the same condition as when Dr. F—— went away—that is to say, he lay in the same position. The pulse was imperceptible; the breathing was gentle (scarcely noticeable, unless through the application of a mirror to the lips); the eyes were closed naturally; and the limbs were as rigid and as cold as marble. Still, the general appearance was certainly not that of death.

As I approached M. Valdemar I made a kind of half effort to influence his right arm into pursuit of my own, as I passed the latter gently to and fro

above his person. In such experiments with this patient I had never perfectly succeeded before, and assuredly I had little thought of succeeding now; but to my astonishment, his arm very readily, although feebly, followed every direction I assigned it with mine. I determined to hazard a few words of conversation.

'M. Valdemar,' I said, 'are you asleep?' He made no answer, but I perceived a tremor about the lips, and was thus induced to repeat the question, again and again. At its third repetition, his whole frame was agitated by a very slight shivering; the eyelids unclosed themselves so far as to display a white line of a ball; the lips moved sluggishly, and from between them, in a barely audible whisper, issued the words—

'Yes; asleep now. Do not wake me!—let me dieso!'

I here felt the limbs and found them as rigid as ever. The right arm, as before, obeyed the direction of my hand. I questioned the sleep-waker again—

'Do you still feel pain in the breast, M. Valdemar?'

The answer now was immediate, but even less audible than before—

'No pain—I am dying.'

I did not think it advisable to disturb him further just then, and nothing more was said or done until the arrival of Dr. F——, who came a little before sunrise, and expressed unbounded astonishment at finding the patient still alive. After feeling the pulse and applying a mirror to the lips, he requested me to speak to the sleep-waker again. I did so, saying—

'M. Valdemar, do you still sleep?'

As before, some minutes elapsed ere a reply was made; and during the interval the dying man seemed to be collecting his energies to speak. At my fourth repetition of the question, he said very faintly, almost inaudibly—

'Yes; still asleep—dying.'

It was now the opinion, or rather the wish, of the physicians, that M. Valdemar should be suffered to remain undisturbed in his present apparently tranquil condition, until death should supervene—and this, it was generally agreed, must now take place within a few minutes. I concluded, however, to speak to him once more, and merely repeated my previous question.

While I spoke, there came a marked change over the countenance of the sleep-waker. The eyes rolled themselves slowly open, the pupils disappearing upwardly; the skin generally assumed a cadaverous hue, resembling not so much parchment as white paper; and the circular hectic spots, which, hitherto, had been strongly defined in the centre of each cheek, *went out* at once. I use this expression, because the suddenness of their departure put me in mind of nothing so much as the extinguishment of a candle by a puff of the breath. The upper lip at the same time writhed itself away from the teeth, which it had previously covered completely; while the lower jaw fell with an audible jerk, leaving the mouth widely extended, and disclosing in full view the swollen and blackened tongue. I presume that no member of the party then present had been unaccustomed to death-bed horrors; but so hideous beyond conception was the appearance of

M. Valdemar at this moment, that there was a general shrinking back from the region of the bed.

I now feel that I have reached a point of this narrative at which every reader will be startled into positive disbelief. It is my business, however, simply to proceed.

There was no longer the faintest sign of vitality in M. Valdemar; and concluding him to be dead, we were consigning him to the charge of the nurses, when a strong vibratory motion was observable in the tongue. This continued for perhaps a minute. At the expiration of this period, there issued from the distended and motionless jaws a voice—such as it would be madness in me to attempt describing. There are, indeed, two or three epithets which might be considered as applicable to it in part; I might say, for example, that the sound was harsh, and broken, and hollow; but the hideous whole is indescribable, for the simple reason that no similar sounds have ever jarred upon the ear of humanity. There were two particulars, nevertheless, which I thought then, and still think, might fairly be stated as characteristic of the intonation—as well adapted to convey some idea of its unearthly peculiarity. In the first place, the voice seemed to reach our ears—at least mine—from a vast distance, or from some deep cavern within the earth. In the second place, it impressed me (I fear, indeed, that it will be impossible to make myself comprehended) as gelatinous or glutinous matters impress the sense of touch.

I have spoken both of 'sound' and of 'voice.' I mean to say that the sound was one of distinct—of even wonderfully, thrillingly distinct—syllabifi-

cation. M. Valdemar *spoke*—obviously in reply to the question I had propounded to him a few minutes before. I had asked him, it will be remembered, if he still slept. He now said—

‘Yes—no—I *have been* sleeping—and—now—now—I *am dead*.’

No person present even affected to deny, or attempted to repress, the unutterable, shuddering horror which these few words, thus uttered, were so well calculated to convey. Mr. L——l (the student) swooned. The nurses immediately left the chamber, and could not be induced to return. My own impressions I would not pretend to render intelligible to the reader. For nearly an hour, we busied ourselves silently—without the utterance of a word—in endeavours to revive Mr. L——l. When he came to himself, we addressed ourselves again to an investigation of M. Valdemar’s condition.

It remained in all respects as I have last described it, with the exception that the mirror no longer afforded the evidence of respiration. An attempt to draw blood from the arm failed. I should mention, too, that this limb was no further subject to my will. I endeavoured in vain to make it follow the direction of my hand. The only real indication, indeed, of the mesmeric influence was now found in the vibratory movement of the tongue, whenever I addressed M. Valdemar a question. He seemed to be making an effort to reply, but had no longer sufficient volition. To queries put to him by any other person than myself he seemed utterly insensible—although I endeavoured to place each member of the company in mesmeric *rapport* with

him. I believe that I have now related all that is necessary to an understanding of the sleep-waker's state at this epoch. Other nurses were procured; and at ten o'clock I left the house in company with the two physicians and Mr. L——l.

In the afternoon we all called again to see the patient. His condition remained precisely the same. We had now some discussion as to the propriety and feasibility of awakening him; but we had little difficulty in agreeing that no good purpose would be served by so doing. It was evident that, so far, death (or what is usually termed death) had been arrested by the mesmeric process. It seemed clear to us all that to awaken M. Valdemar would be merely to insure his instant, or at least his speedy dissolution.

From this period until the close of last week—*an interval of nearly seven months*—we continued to make daily calls at M. Valdemar's house, accompanied, now and then, by medical and other friends. All this time the sleep-waker remained *exactly* as I have last described him. The nurses' attentions were continual.

It was on Friday last that we finally resolved to make the experiment of awakening, or attempting to awaken him; and it is the (perhaps) unfortunate result of this latter experiment which has given rise to so much discussion in private circles—to so much of what I cannot help thinking unwarranted popular feeling.

For the purpose of relieving M. Valdemar from the mesmeric trance, I made use of the customary passes. These for a time were unsuccessful. The first indication of revival was afforded by a partial

descent of the iris. It was observed, as especially remarkable, that this lowering of the pupil was accompanied by the profuse outflowing of a yellowish ichor (from beneath the lids) of a pungent and highly offensive odour.

It was now suggested that I should attempt to influence the patient's arm as heretofore. I made the attempt and failed. Dr. F—— then intimated a desire to have me put a question. I did so as follows—

'M. Valdemar, can you explain to us what are your feelings or wishes now?'

There was an instant return of the hectic circles on the cheeks; the tongue quivered, or rather rolled violently in the mouth (although the jaws and lips remained rigid as before); and at length the same hideous voice which I have already described, broke forth—

'For God's sake!—quick!—quick—put me to sleep—or quick!—waken me!—quick!—*I say to you that I am dead!*'

I was thoroughly unnerved, and for an instant remained undecided what to do. At first I made an endeavour to re-compose the patient; but, failing in this through total abeyance of the will, I retraced my steps, and as earnestly struggled to awaken him. In this attempt I soon saw that I should be successful—or at least I soon fancied that my success would be complete—and I am sure that all in the room were prepared to see the patient awaken.

For what really occurred, however, it is quite impossible that any human being could have been prepared.

THE FACTS IN THE CASE OF M. VALDEMAR 49

As I rapidly made the mesmeric passes, amid ejaculations of 'Dead! dead!' absolutely *bursting* from the tongue and not from the lips of the sufferer, his whole frame at once—within the space of a single minute, or even less, shrunk, crumbled—absolutely *rotted* away beneath my hands. Upon the bed, before that whole company, there lay a nearly liquid mass of loathsome—of detestable putrescence.

THE OLD NURSE'S STORY

By MRS. GASKELL

You know, my dears, that your mother was an orphan, and an only child; and I dare say you have heard that your grandfather was a clergyman up in Westmoreland, where I come from. I was just a girl in the village school, when, one day, your grandmother came in to ask the mistress if there was any scholar there who would do for a nurse-maid; and mighty proud I was, I can tell ye, when the mistress called me up, and spoke to my being a good girl at my needle, and a steady honest girl, and one whose parents were very respectable, though they might be poor. I thought I should like nothing better than to serve the pretty young lady, who was blushing as deep as I was, as she spoke of the coming baby, and what I should have to do with it. However, I see you don't care so much for this part of my story, as for what you think is to come, so I'll tell you at once. I was engaged and settled at the parsonage before Miss Rosamond (that was the baby, who is now your mother) was born. To be sure, I had little enough to do with her when she came, for she was never out of her mother's arms, and slept by her all night long; and proud enough was I sometimes when missis trusted her to me. There never was such a baby before or since, though you've all of you been fine enough in your turns; but for sweet, winning ways, you've none of you

come up to your mother. She took after her mother, who was a real lady born; a Miss Furnivall, a granddaughter of Lord Furnivall's, in Northumberland. I believe she had neither brother nor sister, and had been brought up in my Lord's family till she had married your grandfather, who was just a curate, son to a shopkeeper in Carlisle—but a clever, fine gentleman as ever was—and one who was a right-down hard worker in his parish, which was very wide, and scattered all abroad over the Westmoreland Fells. When your mother, little Miss Rosamond, was about four or five years old, both her parents died in a fortnight—one after the other. Ah! that was a sad time. My pretty young mistress and me was looking for another baby, when my master came home from one of his long rides, wet, and tired, and took the fever he died of; and then she never held up her head again, but just lived to see her dead baby, and have it laid on her breast before she sighed away her life. My mistress had asked me, on her death-bed, never to leave Miss Rosamond; but if she had never spoken a word, I would have gone with the little child to the end of the world.

The next thing, and before we had well stilled our sobs, the executors and guardians came to settle the affairs. They were my poor young mistress's own cousin, Lord Furnivall, and Mr. Esthwaite, my master's brother, a shopkeeper in Manchester; not so well-to-do then as he was afterwards, and with a large family rising about him. Well! I don't know if it were their settling, or because of a letter my mistress wrote on her death-bed to her cousin, my lord; but somehow it was

settled that Miss Rosamond and me were to go to Furnivall Manor House, in Northumberland, and my lord spoke as if it had been her mother's wish that she should live with his family, and as if he had no objections, for that one or two more or less could make no difference in so grand a household. So though that was not the way in which I should have wished the coming of my bright and pretty pet to have been looked at—who was like a sunbeam in any family, be it never so grand—I was well pleased that all the folks in the Dale should stare and admire, when they heard I was going to be young lady's maid at my Lord Furnivall's at Furnivall Manor.

But I made a mistake in thinking we were to go and live where my lord did. It turned out that the family had left Furnivall Manor House fifty years or more. I could not hear that my poor young mistress had ever been there, though she had been brought up in the family; and I was sorry for that, for I should have liked Miss Rosamond's youth to have passed where her mother's had been.

My lord's gentleman, from whom I asked so many questions as I durst, said that the Manor House was at the foot of the Cumberland Fells, and a very grand place; that an old Miss Furnivall, a great-aunt of my lord's, lived there, with only a few servants; but that it was a very healthy place, and my lord had thought that it would suit Miss Rosamond very well for a few years, and that her being there might perhaps amuse his old aunt.

I was bidden by my lord to have Miss Rosamond's things ready by a certain day. He was a stern proud man, as they say all the Lords Furnivall

were; and he never spoke a word more than was necessary. Folk did say he had loved my young mistress; but that, because she knew that his father would object, she would never listen to him, and married Mr. Esthwaite; but I don't know. He never married, at any rate. But he never took much notice of Miss Rosamond; which I thought he might have done if he had cared for her dead mother. He sent his gentleman with us to the Manor House, telling him to join him at Newcastle that same evening; so there was no great length of time for him to make us known to all the strangers before he, too, shook us off; and we were left, two lonely young things (I was not eighteen), in the great old Manor House. It seems like yesterday that we drove there. We had left our own dear parsonage very early, and we had both cried as if our hearts would break, though we were travelling in my lord's carriage, which I thought so much of once. And now it was long past noon on a September day, and we stopped to change horses for the last time at a little smoky town, all full of colliers and miners. Miss Rosamond had fallen asleep, but Mr. Henry told me to waken her, that she might see the park and the Manor House as we drove up. I thought it rather a pity; but I did what he bade me, for fear he should complain of me to my lord. We had left all signs of a town, or even a village, and were then inside the gates of a large wild park—not like the parks here in the north, but with rocks, and the noise of running water, and gnarled thorn-trees, and old oaks, all white and peeled with age.

The road went up about two miles, and then we saw a great and stately house, with many trees

close around it, so close that in some places their branches dragged against the walls when the wind blew; and some hung broken down; for no one seemed to take much charge of the place;—to lop the wood, or to keep the moss-covered carriage-way in order. Only in front of the house all was clear. The great oval drive was without a weed; and neither tree nor creeper was allowed to grow over the long, many-windowed front; at both sides of which a wing projected, which were each the ends of other side fronts; for the house, although it was so desolate, was even grander than I expected. Behind it rose the Fells, which seemed unenclosed and bare enough; and on the left hand of the house, as you stood facing it, was a little, old-fashioned flower-garden, as I found out afterwards. A door opened out upon it from the west front; it had been scooped out of the thick dark wood for some old Lady Furnivall; but the branches of the great forest trees had grown and overshadowed it again, and there were very few flowers that would live there at that time.

When we drove up to the great front entrance, and went into the hall I thought we should be lost—it was so large, and vast, and grand. There was a chandelier all of bronze, hung down from the middle of the ceiling; and I had never seen one before, and looked at it all in amaze. Then, at one end of the hall, was a great fire-place, as large as the sides of the houses in my country, with massy andirons and dogs to hold the wood; and by it were heavy old-fashioned sofas. At the opposite end of the hall, to the left as you went in—on the western side—was an organ built into the wall, and so large

that it filled up the best part of that end. Beyond it, on the same side, was a door; and opposite, on each side of the fire-place, were also doors leading to the east front; but those I never went through as long as I stayed in the house, so I can't tell you what lay beyond.

The afternoon was closing in, and the hall, which had no fire lighted in it, looked dark and gloomy, but we did not stay there a moment. The old servant, who had opened the door for us, bowed to Mr. Henry, and took us in through the door at the further side of the great organ, and led us through several smaller halls and passages into the west drawing-room, where he said that Miss Furnivall was sitting. Poor little Miss Rosamond held very tight to me, as if she were scared and lost in that great place, and as for myself, I was not much better. The west drawing-room was very cheerful-looking, with a warm fire in it, and plenty of good, comfortable furniture about. Miss Furnivall was an old lady not far from eighty, I should think, but I do not know. She was thin and tall, and had a face as full of fine wrinkles as if they had been drawn all over it with a needle's point. Her eyes were very watchful, to make up, I suppose, for her being so deaf as to be obliged to use a trumpet. Sitting with her, working at the same great piece of tapestry, was Mrs. Stark, her maid and companion, and almost as old as she was. She had lived with Miss Furnivall ever since they were both young, and now she seemed more like a friend than a servant; she looked so cold and grey, and stony as if she had never loved or cared for any one; and I don't suppose she did care for any one, except

her mistress; and, owing to the great deafness of the latter, Mrs. Stark treated her very much as if she were a child. Mr. Henry gave some message from my lord, and then he bowed good-bye to us all,—taking no notice of my sweet little Miss Rosamond's outstretched hand—and left us standing there, being looked at by the two old ladies through their spectacles.

I was right glad when they rung for the old footman who had shown us in at first, and told him to take us to our rooms. So we went out of that great drawing-room, and into another sitting-room, and out of that, and then up a great flight of stairs, and along a broad gallery—which was something like a library, having books all down one side, and windows and writing-tables all down the other—till we came to our rooms, which I was not sorry to hear were just over the kitchens; for I began to think I should be lost in that wilderness of a house. There was an old nursery that had been used for all the little lords and ladies long ago, with a pleasant fire burning in the grate, and the kettle boiling on the hob, and tea-things spread out on the table; and out of that room was the night-nursery, with a little crib for Miss Rosamond close to my bed. And old James called up Dorothy, his wife, to bid us welcome; and both he and she were so hospitable and kind, that by and by Miss Rosamond and me felt quite at home; and by the time tea was over, she was sitting on Dorothy's knee, and chattering away as fast as her little tongue could go. I soon found out that Dorothy was from Westmoreland, and that bound her and me together, as it were; and I would never wish to meet with kinder

people than were old James and his wife. James had lived pretty nearly all his life in my lord's family, and thought there was no one so grand as they. He even looked down a little on his wife; because, till he had married her, she had never lived in any but a farmer's household. But he was very fond of her, as well he might be. They had one servant under them, to do all the rough work. Agnes they called her; and she and me, and James and Dorothy, with Miss Furnivall and Mrs. Stark, made up the family; always remembering my sweet little Miss Rosamond! I used to wonder what they had done before she came, they thought so much of her now. Kitchen and drawing-room, it was all the same. The hard, sad Miss Furnivall, and the cold Mrs. Stark, looked pleased when she came fluttering in like a bird, playing and pranking hither and thither, with a continual murmur, and pretty prattle of gladness. I am sure, they were sorry many a time when she flitted away into the kitchen, though they were too proud to ask her to stay with them, and were a little surprised at her taste; though to be sure, as Mrs. Stark said it was not to be wondered at, remembering what stock her father had come of. The great, old rambling house was a famous place for little Miss Rosamond. She made expeditions all over it, with me at her heels; all, except the east wing, which was never opened, and whither we never thought of going. But in the western and northern part was many a pleasant room; full of things that were curiosities to us, though they might not have been to people who had seen more. The windows were darkened by the sweeping boughs of the trees, and the ivy which

had overgrown them: but, in the green gloom, we could manage to see old China jars and carved ivory boxes, and great heavy books, and, above all, the old pictures!

Once, I remember, my darling would have Dorothy go with us to tell us who they all were; for they were all portraits of some of my lord's family, though Dorothy could not tell us the names of every one. We had gone through most of the rooms, when we came to the old state drawing-room over the hall, and there was a picture of Miss Furnivall; or, as she was called in those days, Miss Grace, for she was the younger sister. Such a beauty she must have been! but with such a set, proud look, and such scorn looking out of her handsome eyes, with her eyebrows just a little raised, as if she were wondering how any one could have the impertinence to look at her; and her lip curled at us, as we stood there gazing. She had a dress on, the like of which I had never seen before, but it was all the fashion when she was young: a hat of some soft white stuff like beaver, pulled a little over her brows, and a beautiful plume of feathers sweeping round it on one side; and her gown of blue satin was open in front to a quilted white stomacher.

'Well, to be sure!' said I, when I had gazed my fill. 'Flesh is grass, they do say; but who would have thought that Miss Furnivall had been such an out-and-out beauty, to see her now?'

'Yes,' said Dorothy. 'Folks change sadly. But if what my master's father used to say was true, Miss Furnivall, the elder sister, was handsomer than Miss Grace. Her picture is here somewhere;

but, if I show it you, you must never let on, even to James, that you have seen it. Can the little lady hold her tongue, think you?' asked she.

I was not so sure, for she was such a little sweet, bold, open-spoken child, so I set her to hide herself; and then I helped Dorothy to turn a great picture, that leaned with its face towards the wall, and was not hung up as the others were. To be sure, it beat Miss Grace for beauty; and, I think, for scornful pride, too, though in that matter it might be hard to choose. I could have looked at it an hour, but Dorothy seemed half frightened at having shown it to me, and hurried it back again, and bade me run and find Miss Rosamond, for that there were some ugly places about the house, where she should like ill for the child to go. I was a brave, high-spirited girl, and thought little of what the old woman said, for I liked hide-and-seek as well as any child in the parish; so off I ran to find my little one.

As winter drew on, and the days grew shorter, I was sometimes almost certain that I heard a noise as if some one was playing on the great organ in the hall. I did not hear it every evening; but, certainly, I did very often; usually when I was sitting with Miss Rosamond, after I had put her to bed, and keeping quite still and silent in the bedroom. Then I used to hear it booming and swelling away in the distance. The first night, when I went down to my supper, I asked Dorothy who had been playing music, and James said very shortly that I was a gowk to take the wind soughing among the trees for music: but I saw Dorothy look at him very fearfully, and Bessy, the kitchen-maid, said something beneath her

breath, and went quite white. I saw they did not like my question, so I held my peace till I was with Dorothy alone, when I knew I could get a good deal out of her. So, the next day, I watched my time, and I coaxed and asked her who it was that played the organ; for I knew that it was the organ and not the wind well enough, for all I had kept silence before James. But Dorothy had had her lesson, I'll warrant, and never a word could I get from her. So then I tried Bessy, though I had always held my head rather above her, as I was evened to James and Dorothy, and she was little better than their servant. So she said I must never, never tell; and if I ever told, I was never to say *she* had told me; but it was a very strange noise, and she had heard it many a time, but most of all on winter nights, and before storms; and folks did say, it was the old lord playing on the great organ in the hall, just as he used to do when he was alive; but who the old lord was, or why he played, and why he played on stormy winter evenings in particular, she either could not or would not tell me. Well! I told you I had a brave heart; and I thought it was rather pleasant to have that grand music rolling about the house, let who would be the player; for now it rose above the great gusts of wind, and wailed and triumphed just like a living creature, and then it fell to a softness most complete; only it was always music and tunes, so it was nonsense to call it the wind. I thought at first that it might be Miss Furnivall who played, unknown to Bessy; but one day when I was in the hall by myself, I opened the organ and peeped all about it and around it, as I had done to the organ in Crosthwaite Church once

before, and I saw it was all broken and destroyed inside, though it looked so brave and fine; and then, though it was noonday, my flesh began to creep a little, and I shut it up, and run away pretty quickly to my own bright nursery; and I did not like hearing the music for some time after that, any more than James and Dorothy did. All this time Miss Rosamond was making herself more and more beloved. The old ladies liked her to dine with them at their early dinner; James stood behind Miss Furnivall's chair, and I behind Miss Rosamond's all in state; and, after dinner, she would play about in a corner of the great drawing-room, as still as any mouse, while Miss Furnivall slept, and I had my dinner in the kitchen. But she was glad enough to come to me in the nursery afterwards; for, as she said, Miss Furnivall was so sad, and Mrs. Stark so dull; but she and I were merry enough; and, by-and-by, I got not to care for that weird rolling music, which did one no harm, if we did not know where it came from.

That winter was very cold. In the middle of October the frosts began, and lasted many, many weeks. I remember, one day at dinner, Miss Furnivall lifted up her sad, heavy eyes, and said to Mrs. Stark, 'I am afraid we shall have a terrible winter,' in a strange kind of meaning way. But Mrs. Stark pretended not to hear, and talked very loud of something else. My little lady and I did not care for the frost; not we! As long as it was dry we climbed up the steep brows, behind the house, and went up on the Fells, which were bleak, and bare enough, and there we ran races in the fresh, sharp air; and once we came down by a new path that

took us past the two old gnarled holly-trees, which grew about halfway down by the east side of the house. But the days grew shorter and shorter; and the old lord, if it was he, played more and more stormily and sadly on the great organ. One Sunday afternoon—it must have been towards the end of November—I asked Dorothy to take charge of little Missey when she came out of the drawing-room, after Miss Furnivall had had her nap; for it was too cold to take her with me to church, and yet I wanted to go. And Dorothy was glad enough to promise, and was so fond of the child that all seemed well; and Bessy and I set off very briskly, though the sky hung heavy and black over the white earth, as if the night had never fully gone away; and the air, though still, was very biting and keen.

‘We shall have a fall of snow,’ said Bessy to me. And sure enough, even while we were in church, it came down thick, in great large flakes, so thick it almost darkened the windows. It had stopped snowing before we came out, but it lay soft, thick and deep beneath our feet, as we tramped home. Before we got to the hall the moon rose, and I think it was lighter then,—what with the moon, and what with the white dazzling snow—than it had been when we went to church, between two and three o’clock. I have not told you that Miss Furnivall and Mrs. Stark never went to church: they used to read the prayers together, in their quiet gloomy way; they seemed to feel the Sunday very long without their tapestry-work to be busy at. So when I went to Dorothy in the kitchen, to fetch Miss Rosamond and take her upstairs with me, I did not much wonder when the old woman

told me that the ladies had kept the child with them, and that she had never come to the kitchen, as I had bidden her, when she was tired of behaving pretty in the drawing-room. So I took off my things and went to find her, and bring her to her supper in the nursery. But when I went into the best drawing-room there sat the two old ladies, very still and quiet, dropping out a word now and then but looking as if nothing so bright and merry as Miss Rosamond had ever been near them. Still I thought she might be hiding from me; it was one of her pretty ways; and that she had persuaded them to look as if they knew nothing about her; so I went softly peeping under this sofa, and behind that chair, making believe I was sadly frightened at not finding her.

'What's the matter, Hester?' said Mrs. Stark, sharply. I don't know if Miss Furnivall had seen me, for, as I told you, she was very deaf, and she sat quite still, idly staring into the fire, with her hopeless face. 'I'm only looking for my little Rosy-Posy,' replied I, still thinking that the child was there, and near me, though I could not see her.

'Miss Rosamond is not here,' said Mrs. Stark. 'She went away more than an hour ago to find Dorothy.' And she too turned and went on looking into the fire.

My heart sank at this, and I began to wish I had never left my darling. I went back to Dorothy and told her. James was gone out for the day, but she and me and Bessy took lights and went up into the nursery first, and then we roamed over the great large house, calling and entreating Miss Rosamond to come out of her hiding-place, and not frighten us

to death in that way. But there was no answer; no sound.

'Oh!' said I at last, 'Can she have got into the east wing and hidden there?'

But Dorothy said it was not possible, for that she herself had never been there; that the doors were always locked, and my lord's steward had the keys, she believed; at any rate, neither she nor James had ever seen them: so I said I would go back, and see if, after all, she was not hidden in the drawing-room, unknown to the old ladies; and if I found her there, I said, I would whip her well for the fright she had given me; but I never meant to do it. Well, I went back to the west drawing-room, and I told Mrs. Stark we could not find her anywhere, and asked for leave to look all about the furniture there, for I thought now, that she might have fallen asleep in some warm hidden corner; but no! we looked, Miss Furnivall got up and looked, trembling all over, and she was nowhere there; then we set off again, every one in the house, and looked in all the places we had searched before, but we could not find her. Miss Furnivall shivered and shook so much that Mrs. Stark took her back into the warm drawing-room; but not before they had made me promise to bring her to them when she was found. Well-a-day! I began to think she never would be found, when I bethought me to look out into the great front court, all covered with snow. I was upstairs when I looked out; but it was such clear moonlight, I could see, quite plain, two little footprints, which might be traced from the hall door, and round the corner of the east wing. I don't know how I got down, but I tugged open the great, stiff hall door;

and, throwing the skirt of my gown over my head for a cloak, I ran out. I turned the east corner, and there a black shadow fell on the snow; but when I came again into the moonlight, there were the little foot-marks going up—up to the Fells. It was bitter cold; so cold that the air almost took the skin off my face as I ran, but I ran on, crying to think how my poor little darling must be perished, and frightened. I was within sight of the holly-trees when I saw a shepherd coming down the hill, bearing something in his arms wrapped in his maud. He shouted to me, and asked me if I had lost a bairn; and, when I could not speak for crying, he bore towards me, and I saw my wee bairnie lying still, and white, and stiff, in his arms, as if she had been dead. He told me he had been up the Fells to gather in his sheep, before the deep cold of night came on, and that under the holly-trees (black marks on the hill-side, where no other bush was for miles around) he had found my little lady—my lamb—my queen—my darling—stiff and cold, in the terrible sleep which is frost-begotten. Oh! the joy, and the tears of having her in my arms once again! for I would not let him carry her; but took her, maud and all, into my own arms, and held her near my own warm neck and heart, and felt the life stealing slowly back again into her little gentle limbs. But she was still insensible when we reached the hall, and I had no breath for speech. We went in by the kitchen door.

‘Bring the warming-pan,’ said I; and I carried her upstairs and began undressing her by the nursery fire, which Bessy had kept up. I called my little lammie all the sweet and playful names I

could think of—even while my eyes were blinded by my tears; and at last, oh! at length she opened her large blue eyes. Then I put her into her warm bed, and sent Dorothy down to tell Miss Furnivall that all was well; and I made up my mind to sit by my darling's bedside the live-long night. She fell away into a soft sleep as soon as her pretty head had touched the pillow, and I watched by her until morning light; when she wakened up bright and clear—or so I thought at first—and, my dears, so I think now.

She said that she had fancied that she should like to go to Dorothy, for that both the old ladies were asleep, and it was very dull in the drawing-room; and that, as she was going through the west lobby, she saw the snow through the high window falling—falling—soft and steady; but she wanted to see it lying pretty and white on the ground; so she made her way into the great hall; and then, going to the window, she saw it bright and soft upon the drive; but while she stood there, she saw a little girl, not so old as she was, 'but so pretty,' said my darling, 'and this little girl beckoned to me to come out; and oh, she was so pretty and so sweet, I could not choose but go.' And then this other little girl had taken her by the hand, and side by side the two had gone round the east corner.

'Now you are a naughty little girl, and telling stories,' said I. 'What would your good mamma, that is in heaven, and never told a story in her life, say to her little Rosamond, if she heard her—and I dare say she does—telling stories!'

'Indeed, Hester,' sobbed out my child, 'I'm telling you true. Indeed I am.'

'Don't tell me!' said I, very stern. 'I tracked you by your footmarks through the snow; there were only yours to be seen: and if you had had a little girl to go hand-in-hand with you up the hill, don't you think the footprints would have gone along with yours?'

'I can't help it, dear, dear Hester,' said she, crying, 'if they did not; I never looked at her feet, but she held my hand fast and tight in her little one, and it was very, very cold. She took me up the Fell-path, up to the holly-trees; and there I saw a lady weeping and crying; but when she saw me, she hushed her weeping, and smiled very proud and grand, and took me on her knee, and began to lull me to sleep; and that's all, Hester—but that is true; and my dear mamma knows it is,' said she, crying. So I thought the child was in a fever, and pretended to believe her, as she went over her story—over and over again, and always the same. At last Dorothy knocked at the door with Miss Rosamond's breakfast; and she told me the old ladies were down in the eating parlour, and that they wanted to speak to me. They had both been into the night-nursery the evening before, but it was after Miss Rosamond was asleep; so they had only looked at her—not asked me any questions.

'I shall catch it,' thought I to myself, as I went along the north gallery. 'And yet,' I thought, taking courage, 'it was in their charge I left her; and it's they that's to blame for letting her steal away unknown and unwatched.' So I went in boldly, and told my story. I told it all to Miss Furnivall, shouting it close to her ear; but when I came to the mention of the other little girl out in

the snow, coaxing and tempting her out, and wiling her up to the grand and beautiful lady by the holly-tree, she threw her arms up—her old and withered arms—and cried aloud, 'Oh! Heaven, forgive! Have mercy!'

Mrs. Stark took hold of her; roughly enough, I thought; but she was past Mrs. Stark's management, and spoke to me, in a kind of wild warning and authority.

'Hester! keep her from that child! It will lure her to her death! That evil child! Tell her it is a wicked, naughty child.' Then Mrs. Stark hurried me out of the room; where, indeed, I was glad enough to go; but Miss Furnivall kept shrieking out, 'Oh! have mercy! Wilt Thou never forgive! It is many a long year ago'——

I was very uneasy in my mind after that. I durst never leave Miss Rosamond, night or day, for fear lest she might slip off again, after some fancy or other; and all the more because I thought I could make out that Miss Furnivall was crazy, from their odd ways about her; and I was afraid lest something of the same kind (which might be in the family, you know) hung over my darling. And the great frost never ceased all this time; and whenever it was a more stormy night than usual, between the gusts, and through the wind, we heard the old lord playing on the great organ. But, old lord, or not, wherever Miss Rosamond went, there I followed; for my love for her, pretty helpless orphan, was stronger than my fear for the grand and terrible sound. Besides, it rested with me to keep her cheerful and merry, as beseemed her age. So we played together, and wandered together, here and there, and everywhere;

for I never dared to lose sight of her again in that large and rambling house. And so it happened, that one afternoon, not long before Christmas Day, we were playing together on the billiard-table in the great hall (not that we knew the way of playing, but she liked to roll the smooth ivory balls with her pretty hands, and I liked to do whatever she did); and, by-and-by, without our noticing it, it grew dusk indoors, though it was still light in the open air, and I was thinking of taking her back into the nursery, when, all of a sudden, she cried out:

'Look, Hester! look! there is my poor little girl out in the snow!'

I turned towards the long narrow windows, and there, sure enough, I saw a little girl, less than my Miss Rosamond—dressed all unfit to be out-of-doors such a bitter night—crying, and beating against the window-panes, as if she wanted to be let in. She seemed to sob and wail, till Miss Rosamond could bear it no longer, and was flying to the door to open it, when, all of a sudden, and close up upon us, the great organ pealed out so loud and thundering, it fairly made me tremble; and all the more, when I remembered me that, even in the stillness of that dead-cold weather, I had heard no sound of little battering hands upon the window-glass, although the Phantom Child had seemed to put forth all its force; and, although I had seen it wail and cry, no faintest touch of sound had fallen upon my ears. Whether I remembered all this at the very moment, I do not know; the great organ sound had so stunned me into terror; but this I know, I caught up Miss Rosamond before she got the hall-door opened, and clutched her, and carried

her away, kicking and screaming, into the large bright kitchen, where Dorothy and Agnes were busy with their mince-pies.

'What is the matter with my sweet one?' cried Dorothy, as I bore in Miss Rosamond, who was sobbing as if her heart would break.

'She won't let me open the door for my little girl to come in; and she'll die if she is out on the Fells all night. Cruel, naughty Hester,' she said, slapping me; but she might have struck harder, for I had seen a look of ghastly terror on Dorothy's face, which made my very blood run cold.

'Shut the back-kitchen door fast, and bolt it well,' said she to Agnes. She said no more; she gave me raisins and almonds to quiet Miss Rosamond: but she sobbed about the little girl in the snow, and would not touch any of the good things. I was thankful when she cried herself to sleep in bed. Then I stole down to the kitchen, and told Dorothy I had made up my mind. I would carry my darling back to my father's house in Applethwaite; where, if we lived humbly, we lived at peace. I said I had been frightened enough with the old lord's organ-playing; but now, that I had seen for myself this little moaning child, all decked out as no child in the neighbourhood could be, beating and battering to get in, yet always without any sound or noise—with the dark wound on its right shoulder; and that Miss Rosamond had known it again for the phantom that had nearly lured her to her death (which Dorothy knew was true); I would stand it no longer.

I saw Dorothy change colour once or twice. When I had done, she told me she did not think I could take Miss Rosamond with me, for that she

was my lord's ward, and I had no right over her; and she asked me, would I leave the child that I was so fond of, just for sounds and sights that could do me no harm; and that they had all had to get used to in their turns? I was all in a hot, trembling passion; and I said it was very well for her to talk, that knew what these sights and noises betokened, and that had, perhaps, had something to do with the Spectre-Child while it was alive. And I taunted her so, that she told me all she knew, at last; and then I wished I had never been told, for it only made me afraid more than ever.

She said she had heard the tale from old neighbours, that were alive when she was first married; when folks used to come to the hall sometimes, before it had got such a bad name on the country side: it might not be true, or it might, what she had been told.

The old lord was Miss Furnivall's father—Miss Grace as Dorothy called her, for Miss Maude was the elder, and Miss Furnivall by rights. The old lord was eaten up with pride. Such a proud man was never seen or heard of; and his daughters were like him. No one was good enough to wed them, although they had choice enough; for they were the great beauties of their day, as I had seen by their portraits, where they hung in the state drawing-room. But, as the old saying is, 'Pride will have a fall;' and these two haughty beauties fell in love with the same man, and he no better than a foreign musician, whom their father had down from London to play music with him at the Manor House. For, above all things, next to his pride, the old lord loved music. He could play on nearly every instru-

ment that ever was heard of: and it was a strange thing it did not soften him; but he was a fierce dour old man, and had broken his poor wife's heart with his cruelty, they said. He was mad after music, and would pay any money for it. So he got this foreigner to come; who made such beautiful music, that they said the very birds on the trees stopped their singing to listen. And, by degrees, this foreign gentleman got such a hold over the old lord, that nothing would serve him but that he must come every year; and it was he that had the great organ brought from Holland, and built up in the hall, where it stood now. He taught the old lord to play on it; but many and many a time, when Lord Furnivall was thinking of nothing but his fine organ, and his finer music, the dark foreigner was walking abroad in the woods with one of the young ladies; now Miss Maude, and then Miss Grace.

Miss Maude won the day and carried off the prize, such as it was; and he and she were married, all unknown to any one; and before he made his next yearly visit, she had been confined of a little girl at a farm-house on the Moors, while her father and Miss Grace thought she was away at Doncaster Races. But though she was a wife and a mother, she was not a bit softened, but as haughty and as passionate as ever; and perhaps more so, for she was jealous of Miss Grace, to whom her foreign husband paid a deal of court—by way of blinding her—as he told his wife. But Miss Grace triumphed over Miss Maude, and Miss Maude grew fiercer and fiercer, both with her husband and with her sister; and the former—who could easily shake off what was disagreeable, and hide himself in foreign

countries—went away a month before his usual time that summer, and half-threatened that he would never come back again. Meanwhile, the little girl was left at the farm-house, and her mother used to have her horse saddled and gallop wildly over the hills to see her once every week, at the very least—for where she loved, she loved; and where she hated, she hated. And the old lord went on playing—playing on his organ; and the servants thought the sweet music he made had soothed down his awful temper, of which (Dorothy said) some terrible tales could be told. He grew infirm too, and had to walk with a crutch; and his son—that was the present Lord Furnivall's father—was with the army in America, and the other son at sea; so Miss Maude had it pretty much her own way, and she and Miss Grace grew colder and bitterer to each other every day; till at last they hardly ever spoke, except when the old lord was by. The foreign musician came again the next summer, but it was for the last time; for they led him such a life with their jealousy and their passions, that he grew weary, and went away, and never was heard of again. And Miss Maude, who had always meant to have her marriage acknowledged when her father should be dead, was left now a deserted wife—whom nobody knew to have been married—with a child that she dared not own, although she loved it to distraction; living with a father whom she feared, and a sister whom she hated. When the next summer passed over and the dark foreigner never came, both Miss Maude and Miss Grace grew gloomy and sad; they had a haggard look about them, though they looked handsome as ever. But

by-and-by Miss Maude brightened; for her father grew more and more infirm, and more than ever carried away by his music; and she and Miss Grace lived almost entirely apart, having separate rooms, the one on the west side, Miss Maude on the east—those very rooms which were now shut up. So she thought she might have her little girl with her, and no one need ever know except those who dared not speak about it, and were bound to believe that it was, as she said, a cottager's child she had taken a fancy too. All this, Dorothy said, was pretty well known; but what came afterwards no one knew, except Miss Grace, and Mrs. Stark, who was even then her maid, and much more of a friend to her than ever her sister had been. But the servants supposed, from words that were dropped, that Miss Maude had triumphed over Miss Grace, and told her that all the time the dark foreigner had been mocking her with pretended love—he was her own husband; the colour left Miss Grace's cheek and lips that very day for ever, and she was heard to say many a time that sooner or later she would have her revenge; and Mrs. Stark was for ever spying about the east rooms.

One fearful night, just after the New Year had come in, when the snow was lying thick and deep, and the flakes were still falling—fast enough to blind any one who might be out and abroad—there was a great and violent noise heard, and the old lord's voice above all, cursing and swearing awfully—and the cries of a little child—and the proud defiance of a fierce woman—and the sound of a blow—and a dead stillness—and moans and wailings dying away on the hill-side! Then the old

lord summoned all his servants, and told them, with terrible oaths, and words more terrible, that his daughter had disgraced herself, and that he had turned her out of doors—her, and her child—and that if ever they gave her help—or food—or shelter—he prayed that they might never enter Heaven. And, all the while, Miss Grace stood by him, white and still as any stone; and when he had ended she heaved a great sigh, as much as to say her work was done, and her end was accomplished. But the old lord never touched his organ again, and died within the year; and no wonder! for, on the morrow of that wild and fearful night, the shepherds, coming down the Fell side, found Miss Maude sitting, all crazy and smiling, under the holly-trees, nursing a dead child—with a terrible mark on its right shoulder. 'But that was not what killed it,' said Dorothy; 'it was the frost and the cold;—every wild creature was in its hole, and every beast in its fold—while the child and its mother were turned out to wander on the Fells! And now you know all! and I wonder if you are less frightened now?'

I was more frightened than ever; but I said I was not. I wished Miss Rosamond and myself well out of that dreadful house for ever; but I would not leave her, and I dared not take her away. But oh! how I watched her, and guarded her! We bolted the doors and shut the window-shutters fast, an hour or more before dark, rather than leave them open five minutes too late. But my little lady still heard the weird child crying and mourning; and not all we could do or say could keep her from wanting to go to her, and let her in from the cruel wind and

the snow. All this time, I kept away from Miss Furnivall and Mrs. Stark, as much as ever I could; for I feared them—I knew no good could be about them, with their grey hard faces, and their dreamy eyes, looking back into the ghastly years that were gone. But, even in my fear, I had a kind of pity—for Miss Furnivall, at least. Those gone down to the pit can hardly have a more hopeless look than that which was ever on her face. At last I even got so sorry for her—who never said a word but what was quite forced from her—that I prayed for her; and I taught Miss Rosamond to pray for one who had done a deadly sin; but often when she came to those words, she would listen, and start up from her knees, and say, ‘I hear my little girl plaining and crying very sad—Oh! let her in, or she will die!’

One night—just after New Year’s Day had come at last, and the long winter had taken a turn, as I hoped—I heard the west drawing-room bell ring three times, which was a signal for me. I would not leave Miss Rosamond alone, for all she was asleep—for the old lord had been playing wilder than ever—and I feared lest my darling should waken to hear the spectre child; see her I knew she could not. I had fastened the windows too well for that. So I took her out of her bed and wrapped her up in such outer clothes as were most handy, and carried her down to the drawing-room, where the old ladies sat at their tapestry work as usual. They looked up when I came in, and Mrs. Stark asked, quite astounded, ‘Why did I bring Miss Rosamond there, out of her warm bed?’ I had begun to whisper, ‘Because I was afraid of her being tempted out while I was away, by the wild child in the snow,’

when she stopped me short (with a glance at Miss Furnivall), and said Miss Furnivall wanted me to undo some work she had done wrong, and which neither of them could see to unpick. So I laid my pretty dear on the sofa, and sat down on a stool by them, and hardened my heart against them, as I heard the wind rising and howling.

Miss Rosamond slept on sound, for all the wind blew so; and Miss Furnivall said never a word, nor looked round when the gusts shook the windows. All at once she started up to her full height, and put up one hand, as if to bid us listen.

'I hear voices!' said she, 'I hear terrible screams—I hear my father's voice!'

Just at that moment my darling awakened with a sudden start: 'My little girl is crying, oh, how she is crying!' and she tried to get up and go to her, but she got her feet entangled in the blanket, and I caught her up; for my flesh had begun to creep at these noises, which they heard while we could catch no sound. In a minute or two the noises came, and gathered fast, and filled our ears; we, too, heard voices and screams, and no longer heard the winter's wind that raged abroad. Mrs. Stark looked at me, and I at her, but we dared not speak. Suddenly Miss Furnivall went towards the door, out into the ante-room, through the west lobby, and opened the door into the great hall. Mrs. Stark followed, and I durst not be left, though my heart almost stopped beating for fear. I wrapped my darling tight in my arms, and went out with them. In the hall the screams were louder than ever; they sounded to come from the east wing—nearer and nearer—close on the other side of the locked-up doors—

close behind them. Then I noticed that the great bronze chandelier seemed all alight, though the hall was dim, and that a fire was blazing in the vast hearth-place, though it gave no heat; and I shuddered up with terror, and folded my darling closer to me. But as I did so, the east door shook, and she, suddenly struggling to get free from me, cried, 'Hester! I must go! My little girl is there; I hear her; she is coming! Hester, I must go!'

I held her tight with all my strength; with a set will, I held her. If I had died, my hands would have grasped her still, I was so resolved in my mind. Miss Furnivall stood listening, and paid no regard to my darling, who had got down to the ground, and whom I, upon my knees now, was holding with both my arms clasped round her neck; she still striving and crying to get free.

All at once the east door gave way with a thundering crash, as if torn open in a violent passion, and there came into that broad and mysterious light, the figure of a tall old man, with grey hair and gleaming eyes. He drove before him, with many a relentless gesture of abhorrence, a stern and beautiful woman, with a little child clinging to her dress.

'O Hester! Hester!' cried Miss Rosamond. 'It's the lady! the lady below the holly-trees; and my little girl is with her. Hester! Hester! let me go to her; they are drawing me to them. I feel them—I feel them. I must go!'

Again she was almost convulsed by her efforts to get away; but I held her tighter and tighter, till I feared I should do her a hurt; but rather than let her go towards those terrible phantoms. They

passed along towards the great hall-door, where the winds howled and ravened for their prey; but before they reached that, the lady turned; and I could see that she defied the old man with a fierce and proud defiance; but then she quailed—and then she threw up her arms wildly and piteously to save her child—her little child—from a blow from his uplifted crutch.

And Miss Rosamond was torn as by a power stronger than mine, and writhed in my arms, and sobbed (for by this time the poor darling was growing faint).

‘They want me to go with them on to the Fells—they are drawing me to them. Oh, my little girl! I would come, but cruel, wicked Hester holds me very tight.’ But when she saw the uplifted crutch she swooned away, and I thanked God for it. Just at this moment—when the tall old man, his hair streaming as in the blast of a furnace, was going to strike the little shrinking child—Miss Furnivall, the old woman by my side, cried out, ‘Oh, father! father! spare the little innocent child!’ But just then I saw—we all saw—another phantom shape itself, and grow clear out of the blue and misty light that filled the hall; we had not seen her till now, for it was another lady who stood by the old man, with a look of relentless hate and triumphant scorn. That figure was very beautiful to look upon, with a soft white hat drawn down over the proud brows and a red and curling lip. It was dressed in an open robe of blue satin. I had seen that figure before. It was the likeness of Miss Furnivall in her youth; and the terrible phantoms moved on, regardless of old Miss Furnivall’s wild entreaty—

and the uplifted crutch fell on the right shoulder of the little child, and the younger sister looked on, stony and deadly serene. But at that moment the dim lights, and the fire that gave no heat, went out of themselves, and Miss Furnivall lay at our feet stricken down by the palsy—death-stricken.

Yes! she was carried to her bed that night never to rise again. She lay with her face to the wall muttering low but muttering away: 'Alas! alas! what is done in youth can never be undone in age! What is done in youth can never be undone in age!'

No. 1 BRANCH LINE : THE SIGNAL-MAN

By CHARLES DICKENS

‘HALLOA! Below there!’

When he heard a voice thus calling to him, he was standing at the door of his box, with a flag in his hand, furred round its short pole. One would have thought, considering the nature of the ground, that he could not have doubted from what quarter the voice came; but instead of looking up to where I stood on the top of the steep cutting nearly over his head, he turned himself about, and looked down the Line. There was something remarkable in his manner of doing so, though I could not have said for my life what. But I know it was remarkable enough to attract my notice, even though his figure was foreshortened and shadowed, down in the deep trench, and mine was high above him, so steeped in the glow of an angry sunset, that I had shaded my eyes with my hand before I saw him at all.

‘Halloa! Below!’

From looking down the Line, he turned himself about again and, raising his eyes, saw my figure high above him.

‘Is there any path by which I can come down and speak to you?’

He looked up at me without replying, and I looked down at him without pressing him too soon with a repetition of my idle question. Just then

there came a vague vibration in the earth and air, quickly changing into a violent pulsation, and an oncoming rush that caused me to start back, as though it had force to draw me down. When such vapour as rose to my height from this rapid train had passed me, and was skimming away over the landscape, I looked down again, and saw him re-furling the flag he had shown while the train went by.

I repeated my inquiry. After a pause, during which he seemed to regard me with fixed attention, he motioned with his rolled-up flag towards a point on my level, some two or three hundred yards distant. I called down to him, 'All right!' and made for that point. There, by dint of looking closely about me, I found a rough zigzag descending path notched out, which I followed.

The cutting was extremely deep, and unusually precipitate. It was made through a clammy stone, that became oozier and wetter as I went down. For these reasons, I found the way long enough to give me time to recall a singular air of reluctance or compulsion with which he had pointed out the path.

When I came down low enough upon the zigzag descent to see him again, I saw that he was standing between the rails on the way by which the train had lately passed, in an attitude as if he were waiting for me to appear. He had his left hand at his chin, and that left elbow rested on his right hand, crossed over his breast. His attitude was one of such expectation and watchfulness that I stopped a moment, wondering at it.

I resumed my downward way, and stepping out

upon the level of the railroad, and drawing nearer to him, saw that he was a dark sallow man, with a dark beard and rather heavy eyebrows. His post was in as solitary and dismal a place as ever I saw. On either side, a dripping-wet wall of jagged stone, excluding all view but a strip of sky; the perspective one way only a crooked prolongation of this great dungeon; the shorter perspective in the other direction terminating in a gloomy red light, and the gloomier entrance to a black tunnel, in whose massive architecture there was a barbarous, depressing, and forbidding air. So little sunlight ever found its way to this spot, that it had an earthy, deadly smell; and so much cold wind rushed through it, that it struck chill to me, as if I had left the natural world.

Before he stirred, I was near enough to him to have touched him. Not even then removing his eyes from mine, he stepped back one step, and lifted his hand.

This was a lonesome post to occupy (I said), and it had riveted my attention when I looked down from up yonder. A visitor was a rarity, I should suppose; not an unwelcome rarity, I hoped? In me, he merely saw a man who had been shut up within narrow limits all his life, and who, being at last set free, had a newly-awakened interest in these great works. To such purpose I spoke to him; but I am far from sure of the terms I used; for, besides that I am not happy in opening any conversation, there was something in the man that daunted me.

He directed a most curious look towards the red light near the tunnel's mouth, and looked all about

it, as if something were missing from it, and then looked at me.

That light was part of his charge? Was it not?

He answered in a low voice—'Don't you know it is?'

The monstrous thought came into my mind, as I perused the fixed eyes and the saturnine face, that this was a spirit, not a man. I have speculated since, whether there may have been infection in his mind.

In my turn I stepped back. But in making the action, I detected in his eyes some latent fear of me. This put the monstrous thought to flight.

'You look at me,' I said, forcing a smile, 'as if you had a dread of me.'

'I was doubtful,' he returned, 'whether I had seen you before.'

'Where?'

He pointed to the red light he had looked at.

'There?' I said.

Intently watchful of me, he replied (but without sound), 'Yes.'

'My good fellow, what should I do there? However, be that as it may, I never was there, you may swear.'

'I think I may,' he rejoined. 'Yes; I am sure I may.'

His manner cleared, like my own. He replied to my remarks with readiness, and in well-chosen words. Had he much to do there? Yes; that was to say, he had enough responsibility to bear; but exactness and watchfulness were what was required of him, and of actual work—manual labour—he had next to none. To change that signal, to

trim those lights, and to turn this iron handle now and then, was all he had to do under that head. Regarding those many long and lonely hours of which I seemed to make so much, he could only say that the routine of his life had shaped itself into that form, and he had grown used to it. He had taught himself a language down here—if only to know it by sight, and to have formed his own crude ideas of its pronunciation, could be called learning it. He had also worked at fractions and decimals, and tried a little algebra; but he was, and had been as a boy, a poor hand at figures. Was it necessary for him when on duty always to remain in that channel of damp air, and could he never rise into the sunshine from between those high stone walls? Why, that depended upon time and circumstances. Under some conditions there would be less upon the Line than under others, and the same held good as to certain hours of the day and night. In bright weather, he did choose occasions for getting a little above these lower shadows; but, being at all times liable to be called by his electric bell, and at such times listening for it with redoubled anxiety, the relief was less than I would suppose.

He took me into his box, where there was a fire, a desk for an official book in which he had to make certain entries, a telegraphic instrument with its dial, face and needles, and the little bell of which he had spoken. On my trusting that he would excuse the remark that he had been well educated, and (I hoped I might say without offence), perhaps educated above that station, he observed that instances of slight incongruity in such wise would rarely be found wanting among large bodies of

men; that he had heard it was so in workhouses, in the police force, even in that last desperate resource, the army; and that he knew it was so, more or less, in any great railway staff. He had been, when young (if I could believe it, sitting in that hut—he scarcely could), a student of natural philosophy, and had attended lectures; but he had run wild, misused his opportunities, gone down, and never risen again. He had no complaint to offer about that. He had made his bed, and he lay upon it. It was far too late to make another.

All that I have here condensed he said in a quiet manner, with his grave dark regards divided between me and the fire. He threw in the word, 'Sir,' from time to time, and especially when he referred to his youth—as though to request me to understand that he claimed to be nothing but what I found him. He was several times interrupted by the little bell, and had to read off messages, and send replies. Once he had to stand without the door, and display a flag as a train passed, and make some verbal communication to the driver. In the discharge of his duties, I observed him to be remarkably exact and vigilant, breaking off his discourse at a syllable and remaining silent until what he had to do was done.

In a word, I should have set this man down as one of the safest of men to be employed in that capacity, but for the circumstance that while he was speaking to me he twice broke off with a fallen colour, turned his face towards the little bell when it did not ring, opened the door of the hut (which was kept shut to exclude the unhealthy damp), and looked out towards the red light near the mouth

of the tunnel. On both of those occasions, he came back to the fire with the inexplicable air upon him which I had remarked, without being able to define, when we were so far asunder.

Said I, when I rose to leave him, 'You almost make me think that I have met with a contented man.'

(I am afraid I must acknowledge that I said it to lead him on.)

'I believe I used to be so,' he rejoined, in the low voice in which he had first spoken; 'but I am troubled, Sir, I am troubled.'

He would have recalled the words if he could. He had said them, however, and I took them up quickly.

'With what? What is your trouble?'

'It is very difficult to impart, Sir. It is very, very difficult to speak of. If ever you make me another visit, I will try to tell you.'

'But I expressly intend to make you another visit. Say, when shall it be?'

'I go off early in the morning, and I shall be on again at ten to-morrow night, Sir.'

'I will come at eleven.'

He thanked me, and went out at the door with me. 'I'll show my white light, Sir,' he said, in his peculiar low voice, 'till you have found the way up. When you have found it, don't call out! And when you are at the top, don't call out.'

His manner seemed to make the place strike colder to me, but I said no more than, 'Very well.'

'And when you come down to-morrow night, don't call out! Let me ask you a parting question. What made you cry, "Halloa! Below there!" to-night?'

'Heaven knows,' said I, 'I cried something to that effect——'

'Not to that effect, Sir. Those were the very words. I know them well.'

'Admit those were the very words. I said them, no doubt, because I saw you below.'

'For no other reason?'

'What other reason could I possibly have?'

'You had no feeling that they were conveyed to you in any supernatural way?'

'No.'

He wished me good night, and held up his light. I walked by the side of the down Line of rails (with a very disagreeable sensation of a train coming behind me) until I found the path. It was easier to mount than to descend, and I got back to my inn without any adventure.

Punctual to my appointment, I placed my foot on the first notch of the zigzag next night, as the distant clocks were striking eleven. He was waiting for me at the bottom, with his white light on. 'I have not called out,' I said, when we came close together; 'may I speak now?' 'By all means, Sir.' 'Good night, then, and here's my hand.' 'Good night, Sir, and here's mine.' With that we walked side by side to his box, entered it, closed the door, and sat down by the fire.

'I have made up my mind, Sir,' he began, bending forward as soon as we were seated, and speaking in a tone but a little above a whisper, 'that you shall not have to ask me twice what troubles me. I took you for some one else yesterday evening. That troubles me.'

'That mistake?'

'No. That some one else.'

'Who is it?'

'I don't know.'

'Like me?'

'I don't know. I never saw the face. The left arm is across the face, and the right arm is waved, —violently waved. This way.'

I followed his action with my eyes, and it was the action of an arm gesticulating, with the utmost passion and vehemence, 'For God's sake, clear the way!'

'One moonlight night,' said the man, 'I was sitting here, when I heard a voice cry, "Halloa! Below there!" I started up, looked from that door, and saw this Some one else standing by the red light near the tunnel, waving as I just now showed you. The voice seemed hoarse with shouting, and it cried, "Look out! Look out!" And then again, "Halloa! Below there! Look out!" I caught up my lamp, turned it on red, and ran towards the figure calling, "What's wrong? What has happened? Where?" It stood just outside the blackness of the tunnel. I advanced so close upon it that I wondered at its keeping the sleeve across its eyes. I ran right up at it, and had my hand stretched out to pull the sleeve away, when it was gone.'

'Into the tunnel?' said I.

'No. I ran on into the tunnel, five hundred yards. I stopped, and held my lamp above my head, and saw the figures of the measured distance, and saw the wet stains stealing down the walls and trickling through the arch. I ran out again faster than I had run in (for I had a mortal abhorrence of the place upon me), and I looked all round the red light with

my own red light, and I went up the iron ladder to the gallery atop of it, and I came down again, and ran back here. I telegraphed both ways. "An alarm has been given. Is anything wrong?" The answer came back, both ways, "All well."

Resisting the slow touch of a frozen finger tracing out my spine, I showed him how that this figure must be a deception of his sense of sight; and how that figures, originating in disease of the delicate nerves that minister to the functions of the eye, were known to have often troubled patients, some of whom had become conscious of the nature of their affliction, and had even proved it by experiments upon themselves. 'As to an imaginary cry,' said I, 'do but listen for a moment to the wind in this unnatural valley while we speak so low, and to the wild harp it makes of the telegraph wires.'

That was all very well, he returned, after we had sat listening for a while, and he ought to know something of the wind and the wires—he who so often passed long winter nights there, alone and watching. But he would beg to remark that he had not finished.

I asked his pardon, and he slowly added these words, touching my arm—

'Within six hours after the Appearance, the memorable accident on this Line happened, and within ten hours the dead and wounded were brought along through the tunnel over the spot where the figure had stood.'

A disagreeable shudder crept over me, but I did my best against it. It was not to be denied, I rejoined, that this was a remarkable coincidence, calculated deeply to impress his mind. But it was

unquestionable that remarkable coincidences did continually occur, and they must be taken into account in dealing with such a subject. Though to be sure I must admit, I added (for I thought I saw that he was going to bring the objection to bear upon me), men of common sense did not allow much for coincidences in making the ordinary calculations of life.

He again begged to remark that he had not finished.

I again begged his pardon for being betrayed into interruptions.

'This,' he said, again laying his hand upon my arm, and glancing over his shoulder with hollow eyes, 'was just a year ago. Six or seven months passed, and I had recovered from the surprise and shock, when one morning, as the day was breaking, I, standing at the door, looked towards the red light, and saw the spectre again.' He stopped with a fixed look at me.

'Did it cry out?'

'No. It was silent.'

'Did it wave its arm?'

'No. It leaned against the shaft of the light, with both hands before the face. Like this.'

Once more I followed his action with my eyes. It was an action of mourning. I have seen such an attitude on stone figures on tombs.

'Did you go up to it?'

'I came in and sat down, partly to collect my thoughts, partly because it had turned me faint. When I went to the door again, daylight was above me, and the ghost was gone.'

'But nothing followed? Nothing came of this?'

He touched me on the arm with his forefinger twice or thrice, giving a ghastly nod each time:—

‘That very day, as a train came out of the tunnel I noticed, at a carriage window on my side, what looked like a confusion of hands and heads, and something waved. I saw it just in time to signal the driver, Stop! He shut off, and put his brake on, but the train drifted past here a hundred and fifty yards or more. I ran after it, and, as I went along, heard terrible screams and cries. A beautiful young lady had died instantaneously in one of the compartments, and was brought in here, and laid down on this floor between us.’

Involuntarily I pushed my chair back, as I looked from the boards at which he pointed to himself.

‘True, Sir. True. Precisely as it happened, so I tell it you.’

I could think of nothing to say, to any purpose, and my mouth was very dry. The wind and the wires took up the story with a long lamenting wail.

He resumed, ‘Now, Sir, mark this, and judge how my mind is troubled. The spectre came back a week ago. Ever since, it has been there, now and again, by fits and starts.’

‘At the light?’

‘At the Danger-light.’

‘What does it seem to do?’

He repeated, if possible with increased passion and vehemence, that former gesticulation of ‘For God’s sake, clear the way!’

Then he went on. ‘I have no peace or rest for it. It calls to me, for many minutes together, in an agonized manner, “Below there! Look out! Look

out!" It stands waving to me. It rings my little bell——'

I caught at that. 'Did it ring your bell yesterday evening when I was here, and you went to the door?'

'Twice.'

'Why, see,' said I, 'how your imagination misleads you. My eyes were on the bell, and my ears were open to the bell, and if I am a living man, it did NOT ring at those times. No, nor at any other time, except when it was rung in the natural course of physical things by the station communicating with you.'

He shook his head. 'I have never made a mistake as to that yet, Sir. I have never confused the spectre's ring with the man's. The ghost's ring is a strange vibration in the bell that it derives from nothing else, and I have not asserted that the bell stirs to the eye. I don't wonder that you failed to hear it. But *I* heard it.'

'And did the spectre seem to be there when you looked out?'

'It WAS there.'

'Both times?'

He repeated firmly: 'Both times.'

'Will you come to the door with me, and look for it now?'

He bit his under lip as though he were somewhat unwilling, but arose. I opened the door, and stood on the step, while he stood in the doorway. There was the danger-light. There was the dismal mouth of the tunnel. There were the high, wet stone walls of the cutting. There were the stars above them.

'Do you see it?' I asked him, taking particular note of his face. His eyes were prominent and

strained, but not very much more so, perhaps, than my own had been when I had directed them earnestly towards the same spot.

'No,' he answered. 'It is not there.'

'Agreed,' said I.

We went in again, shut the door, and resumed our seats. I was thinking how best to improve this advantage, if it might be called one, when he took up the conversation in such a matter-of-course way, so assuming that there could be no serious question of fact between us, that I felt myself placed in the weakest of positions.

'By this time you will fully understand, Sir,' he said, 'that what troubles me so dreadfully is the question, What does the spectre mean?'

I was not sure, I told him, that I did fully understand.

'What is its warning against?' he said, ruminating, with his eyes on the fire, and only by times turning them on me. 'What is the danger? Where is the danger? There is danger overhanging somewhere on the Line. Some dreadful calamity will happen. It is not to be doubted this third time, after what has gone before. But surely this is a cruel haunting of *me*. What can I do?'

He pulled out his handkerchief, and wiped the drops from his heated forehead.

'If I telegraph Danger, on either side of me, or on both, I can give no reason for it,' he went on, wiping the palms of his hands. 'I should get into trouble and do no good. They would think I was mad. This is the way it would work—Message: "Danger! Take care!" Answer: "What Danger? Where?" Message: "Don't know. But, for God's

sake, take care!" They would displace me. What else could they do?"

His pain of mind was most pitiable to see. It was the mental torture of a conscientious man, oppressed beyond endurance by an unintelligible responsibility involving life.

'When it first stood under the Danger-light,' he went on, putting his dark hair back from his head, and drawing his hands outward across and across his temples in an extremity of feverish distress, 'why not tell me where that accident was to happen—if it must happen? Why not tell me how it could be averted—if it could have been averted? When on its second coming it hid its face, why not tell me, instead, "She is going to die. Let them keep her at home?" If it came, on those two occasions, only to show me that its warnings were true, and so to prepare me for the third, why not warn me plainly now? And I, Lord help me! A mere poor signal-man on this solitary station! Why not go to somebody with credit to be believed, and power to act?'

When I saw him in this state, I saw that for the poor man's sake, as well as for the public safety, what I had to do for the time was to compose his mind. Therefore, setting aside all question of reality or unreality between us, I represented to him that whoever thoroughly discharged his duty must do well, and that at least it was his comfort that he understood his duty, though he did not understand these confounding Appearances. In this effort I succeeded far better than in the attempt to reason him out of his conviction. He became calm; the occupations incidental to his post as the night advanced began to make larger demands on his

attention: and I left him at two in the morning. I had offered to stay through the night, but he would not hear of it.

That I more than once looked back at the red light as I ascended the pathway, that I did not like the red light, and that I should have slept but poorly if my bed had been under it, I see no reason to conceal. Nor did I like the two sequences of the accident and the dead girl. I see no reason to conceal that either.

But what ran most in my thoughts was the consideration how ought I to act, having become the recipient of this disclosure? I had proved the man to be intelligent, vigilant, painstaking, and exact; but how long might he remain so, in his state of mind? Though in a subordinate position, still he held a most important trust, and would I (for instance) like to stake my life on the chance of his continuing to execute it with precision?

Unable to overcome a feeling that there would be something treacherous in my communicating what he had told me to his superiors in the Company, without first being plain with himself and proposing a middle course to him, I ultimately resolved to offer to accompany him (otherwise keeping his secret for the present) to the wisest medical practitioner we could hear of in those parts, and to take his opinion. A change in his time of duty would come round next night, he had apprised me, and he would be off an hour or two after sunrise, and on again soon after sunset. I had appointed to return accordingly.

Next evening was a lovely evening and I walked out early to enjoy it. The sun was not yet quite

down when I traversed the field-path near the top of the deep cutting. I would extend my walk for an hour, I said to myself, half an hour on and half an hour back, and it would then be time to go to my signal-man's box.

Before pursuing my stroll, I stepped to the brink, and mechanically looked down, from the point from which I had first seen him. I cannot describe the thrill that seized upon me, when, close at the mouth of the tunnel, I saw the appearance of a man, with his left sleeve across his eyes, passionately waving his right arm. *

The nameless horror that oppressed me passed in a moment, for in a moment I saw that this appearance of a man was a man indeed, and that there was a little group of other men, standing at a short distance, to whom he seemed to be rehearsing the gesture he made. The Danger-light was not yet lighted. Against its shaft a little low hut, entirely new to me, had been made of some wooden supports and tarpaulin. It looked no bigger than a bed.

With an irresistible sense that something was wrong—with a flashing self-reproachful fear that fatal mischief had come of my leaving the man there, and causing no one to be sent to overlook or correct what he did—I descended the notched path with all the speed I could make.

'What is the matter?' I asked the men.

'Signal-man killed this morning, Sir.'

'Not the man belonging to that box?'

'Yes, Sir.'

'Not the man I know?' *

'You will recognize him, Sir, if you knew him,'

said the man who spoke for the others, solemnly uncovering his own head, and raising an end of the tarpaulin, 'for his face is quite composed.'

'O, how did this happen, how did this happen?' I asked, turning from one to another as the hut closed in again.

'He was cut down by an engine, Sir. No man in England knew his work better. But somehow he was not clear of the outer rail. It was just at broad day. He had struck the light, and had the lamp in his hand. As the engine came out of the tunnel, his back was towards her, and she cut him down. That man drove her, and was showing how it happened. Show the gentleman, Tom.'

The man, who wore a rough dark dress, stepped back to his former place at the mouth of the tunnel.

'Coming round the curve of the tunnel, Sir,' he said, 'I saw him at the end, like as if I saw him down a perspective-glass. There was no time to check speed, and I knew him to be very careful. As he didn't seem to take heed of the whistle, I shut it off when we were running down upon him, and called to him as loud as I could call.'

'What did you say?'

'I said, "Below there! Look out! Look out! For God's sake, clear the way!"'

I started.

'Ah! it was a dreadful time, Sir. I never left off calling to him. I put my arm before my eyes not to see, and I waved this arm to the last; but it was no use.'

Without prolonging the narrative to dwell on any one of its curious circumstances more than on any other, I may, in closing it, point out the

coincidence that the warning of the Engine-Driver included, not only the words which the unfortunate Signal-man had repeated to me as haunting him, but also the words which I myself—not he—had attached, and that only in my own mind, to the gesticulation he had imitated.

SQUIRE TOBY'S WILL

By J. SHERIDAN LE FANU

MANY persons accustomed to travel the old York and London road, in the days of stage-coaches, will remember passing, in the afternoon, say, of an autumn day, in their journey to the capital, about three miles south of the town of Applebury, and a mile and a half before you reach the old Angel Inn, a large black-and-white house, as those old-fashioned cage-work habitations are termed, dilapidated and weather-stained, with broad lattice windows glimmering all over in the evening sun with little diamond panes, and thrown into relief by a dense background of ancient elms. A wide avenue, now overgrown like a churchyard with grass and weeds, and flanked by double rows of the same dark trees, old and gigantic, with here and there a gap in their solemn files, and sometimes a fallen tree lying across on the avenue, leads up to the hall-door.

Looking up its sombre and lifeless avenue from the top of the London coach, as I have often done, you are struck with so many signs of desertion and decay—the tufted grass sprouting in the chinks of the steps and window-stones, the smokeless chimneys over which the jackdaws are wheeling, the absence of human life and all its evidence, that you conclude at once that the place is uninhabited and abandoned to decay. The name of this ancient

house is Gylingden Hall. Tall hedges and old timber quickly shroud the old place from view, and about a quarter of a mile further on you pass, embowered in melancholy trees, a small and ruinous Saxon chapel, which, time out of mind, has been the burying-place of the family of Marston, and partakes of the neglect and desolation which brood over their ancient dwelling-place.

The grand melancholy of the secluded valley of Gylingden, lonely as an enchanted forest, in which the crows returning to their roosts among the trees, and the straggling deer who peep from beneath their branches, seem to hold a wild and undisturbed dominion, heightens the forlorn aspect of Gylingden Hall.

Of late years repairs have been neglected, and here and there the roof is stripped, and 'the stitch in time' has been wanting. At the side of the house exposed to the gales that sweep through the valley like a torrent through its channel, there is not a perfect window left, and the shutters but imperfectly exclude the rain. The ceilings and walls are mildewed and green with damp stains. Here and there, where the drip falls from the ceiling, the floors are rotting. On stormy nights, as the guard described, you can hear the doors clapping in the old house, as far away as old Gryston bridge, and the howl and sobbing of the wind through its empty galleries.

About seventy years ago died the old Squire, Toby Marston, famous in that part of the world for his hounds, his hospitality, and his vices. He had done kind things, and he had fought duels: he had given away money and he had horse-whipped

people. He carried with him some blessings and a good many curses, and left behind him an amount of debts and charges upon the estates which appalled his two sons, who had no taste for business or accounts and had never suspected, till that wicked, open-handed, and swearing old gentleman died, how very nearly he had run the estates into insolvency.

They met at Gylingden Hall. They had the will before them, and lawyers to interpret, and information without stint, as to the encumbrances with which the deceased had saddled them. The will was so framed as to set the two brothers instantly at deadly feud.

These brothers differed in some points; but in one material characteristic they resembled one another, and also their departed father. They never went into a quarrel by halves, and once in, they did not stick at trifles.

The elder, Scroope Marston, the more dangerous man of the two, had never been a favourite of the old Squire. He had no taste for the sports of the field and the pleasures of a rustic life. He was no athlete, and he certainly was not handsome. All this the Squire resented. The young man, who had no respect for him, and outgrew his fear of his violence as he came to manhood, retorted. This aversion, therefore, in the ill-conditioned old man grew into positive hatred. He used to wish that d——d pippin-squeezing, humpbacked rascal Scroope out of the way of better men—meaning his youngerson Charles; and in his cups would talk in a way which even the old and the young fellows who followed his hounds, and drank his port, and

could stand a reasonable amount of brutality, did not like.

Scroope Marston was slightly deformed, and he had the lean sallow face, piercing black eyes, and black lank hair, which sometimes accompany deformity.

'I'm no feyther o' that hog-backed creature. I'm no sire of his'n, d——n him! I'd as soon call that tongs son o' mine,' the old man used to bawl, in allusion to his son's long, lank limbs: 'Charlie's a man, but that's a jack-an-ape. He has no good nature; there's nothing handy, nor manly, nor no one turn of a Marston in him.'

And when he was pretty drunk, the old Squire used to swear he should never 'sit at the head o' that board; nor frighten away folk from Gylingden Hall wi' his d——d hatchet-face—the black loon!'

'Handsome Charlie was the man for his money. He knew what a horse was, and could sit to his bottle; and the lasses were all clean *wad* about him. He was a Marston every inch of his six foot two.'

Handsome Charlie and he, however, had also had a row or two. The old Squire was free with his horsewhip as with his tongue, and on occasion when neither weapon was quite practicable, had been known to give a fellow 'a tap o' his knuckles.' Handsome Charlie, however, thought there was a period at which personal chastisement should cease; and one night, when the port was flowing, there was some allusion to Marion Hayward, the miller's daughter, which for some reason the old gentleman did not like. Being 'in liquor,' and having clearer ideas about pugilism than self-government, he struck out, to the surprise of all present, at Hand-

some Charlie. The youth threw back his head scientifically, and nothing followed but the crash of a decanter on the floor. But the old Squire's blood was up, and he bounced from his chair. Up jumped Handsome Charlie, resolved to stand no nonsense. Drunken Squire Lilbourne, intending to mediate, fell flat on the floor, and cut his ear among the glasses. Handsome Charlie caught the thump which the old Squire discharged at him upon his open hand, and catching him by the cravat, swung him with his back to the wall. They said the old man never looked so purple, nor his eyes so goggle before; and then Handsome Charlie pinioned him tight to the wall by both arms.

'Well, I say—come, don't you talk no more nonsense o' that sort, and I won't lick you,' croaked the old Squire. 'You stopped that un clever, you did. Didn't he? Come, Charlie, man, gie us your hand, I say, and sit down again, lad.' And so the battle ended; and I believe it was the last time the Squire raised his hand to Handsome Charlie.

But those days were over. Old Toby Marston lay cold and quiet enough now, under the drip of the mighty ash tree within the Saxon ruin where so many of the old Marston race returned to dust, and were forgotten. The weather-stained top-boots and leather-breeches, the three-cornered cocked hat to which old gentlemen of that day still clung, and the well-known red waistcoat that reached below his hips, and the fierce pug face of the old Squire, were now but a picture of memory. And the brothers between whom he had planted an irreconcilable quarrel, were now in their new mourning suits, with the gloss still on, debating furiously

across the table in the great oak parlour, which had so often resounded to the banter and coarse songs, the oaths and laughter of the congenial neighbours whom the old Squire of Gylingden Hall loved to assemble there.

These young gentlemen, who had grown up in Gylingden Hall, were not accustomed to bridle their tongues, nor, if need be, to hesitate about a blow. Neither had been at the old man's funeral. His death had been sudden. Having been helped to his bed in that hilarious and quarrelsome state which was induced by port and punch, he was found dead in the morning—his head hanging over the side of the bed, and his face very black and swollen.

Now the Squire's will despoiled his eldest son of Gylingden, which had descended to the heir time out of mind. Scroope Marston was furious. His deep stern voice was heard inveighing against his dead father and living brother, and the heavy thumps on the table with which he enforced his stormy recriminations resounded through the large chamber. Then broke in Charles's rougher voice, and then came a quick alternation of short sentences, and then both voices together in growing loudness and anger, and at last, swelling the tumult, the expostulations of pacific and frightened lawyers, and at last a sudden break up of the conference. Scroope broke out of the room, his pale furious face showing whiter against his long black hair, his dark fierce eyes blazing, his hands clenched, and looking more ungainly and deformed than ever in the convulsions of his fury.

Very violent words must have passed between them; for Charlie, though he was the winning man,

was almost as angry as Scroope. The elder brother was for holding possession of the house, and putting his rival to legal process to oust him. But his legal advisers were clearly against it. So, with a heart boiling over with gall, up he went to London, and found the firm who had managed his father's business fair and communicative enough. They looked into the settlements, and found that Gylingden was excepted. It was very odd, but so it was, specially excepted; so that the right of the old Squire to deal with it by his will could not be questioned.

Notwithstanding all this, Scroope, breathing vengeance and aggression, and quite willing to wreck himself provided that he could run his brother down, assailed Handsome Charlie, and battered old Squire Toby's will in the Prerogative Court and also at common law, and the feud between the brothers was knit, and every month their exasperation was heightened.

Scroope was beaten, and defeat did not soften him. Charles might have forgiven hard words; but he had been himself worsted during the long campaign in some of those skirmishes, special motions, and so forth, that constitute the episodes of a legal epic like that in which the Marston brothers figured as opposing combatants; and the blight of law-costs had touched him, too, with the usual effect upon the temper of a man of embarrassed means. Years flew, and brought no healing on their wings. On the contrary, the deep corrosion of this hatred bit deeper by time. Neither brother married. But an accident of a different kind befell the younger, Charles Marston, which abridged his enjoyments very materially.

This was a bad fall from his hunter. There were severe fractures, and there was concussion of the brain. For some time it was thought that he could not recover. He disappointed these evil auguries, however. He did recover, but changed in two essential particulars. He had received an injury in his hip, which doomed him never more to sit in the saddle. And the rollicking animal spirits which hitherto had never failed him, had now taken flight for ever.

He had been for five days in a state of coma—absolute insensibility—and when he recovered consciousness he was haunted by an indescribable anxiety.

Tom Cooper, who had been butler in the palmy days of Gylingden Hall, under Squire Toby, still maintained his post with old-fashioned fidelity, in these days of faded splendour and frugal house-keeping. Twenty years had passed since the death of his old master. He had grown lean, and stooped, and his face, dark with the peculiar brown of age, furrowed and gnarled, and his temper, except with his master, had waxed surly.

His master had visited Bath and Buxton, and came back, as he went, lame, and halting gloomily about with the aid of a stick. When the hunter was sold, the last tradition of the old life at Gylingden disappeared. The young Squire, as he was still called, excluded by his mischance from the hunting field, dropped into a solitary way of life, and halted slowly and solitarily about the old place, seldom raising his eyes, and with an appearance of indescribable gloom.

Old Cooper could talk freely on occasion with

his master; and one day he said, as he handed him his hat and stick in the hall:

'You should rouse yourself up a bit, Master Charles!'

'It's past rousing with me, old Cooper.'

'It's just this, I'm thinking: there's something on your mind, and you won't tell no one. There's no good keeping it on your stomach. You'll be a deal lighter if you tell it. Come, now, what is it, Master Charlie?'

The Squire looked with his round grey eyes straight into Cooper's eyes. He felt that there was a sort of spell broken. It was like the old rule of the ghost who can't speak till it is spoken to. He looked earnestly into old Cooper's face for some seconds, and sighed deeply.

'It ain't the first good guess you've made in your day, old Cooper, and I'm glad you've spoke. It's bin on my mind, sure enough, ever since I had that fall. Come in here after me, and shut the door.'

The Squire pushed open the door of the oak parlour, and looked round on the pictures abstractedly. He had not been there for some time, and, seating himself on the table, he looked again for a while in Cooper's face before he spoke.

'It's not a great deal, Cooper, but it troubles me, and I would not tell it to the parson nor the doctor; for, God knows what they'd say, though there's nothing to signify in it. But you were always true to the family, and I don't mind if I tell you.'

'Tis as safe with Cooper, Master Charles, as if 'twas locked in a chest, and sunk in a well.'

'It's only this,' said Charles Marston, looking

down on the end of his stick, with which he was tracing lines and circles, 'all the time I was lying like dead, as you thought, after that fall, I was with the old master.' He raised his eyes to Cooper's again as he spoke, and with an awful oath he repeated—'I was with him, Cooper!'

'He was a good man, sir, in his way,' repeated old Cooper, returning his gaze with awe. 'He was a good master to me, and a good father to you, and I hope he's happy. May God rest him!'

'Well,' said Squire Charles, 'it's only this: the whole of that time I was with him, or he was with me—I don't know which. The upshot is, we were together, and I thought I'd never get out of his hands again, and all the time he was bullying me about some one thing; and if it was to save my life, Tom Cooper, by—— from the time I waked I never could call to mind what it was; and I think I'd give that hand to know; and if you can think of anything it might be—for God's sake! don't be afraid, Tom Cooper, but speak it out, for he threatened me hard, and it was surely him.'

Here ensued a silence.

'And what did you think it might be yourself, Master Charles?' said Cooper.

'I han't thought of aught that's likely. I'll never hit on't—*never*. I thought it might happen he knew something about that d—— hump-backed villain, Scroope, that swore before Lawyer Gingham I made away with a paper of settlements—me and father; and, as I hope to be saved, Tom Cooper, there never was a bigger lie! I'd a had the law of him for them identical words, and cast him for more than he's worth; only Lawyer Gingham never

goes into nothing for me since money grew scarce in Gylingden; and I can't change my lawyer, I owe him such a hatful of money. But he did, he swore he'd hang me yet for it. He said it in them identical words—he'd never rest till he *hanged* me for it, and I think it was, like enough, something about *that*, the old master was troubled; but it's enough to drive a man mad. I *can't* bring it to mind—I can't remember a word he said, only he threatened awful, and looked—Lord a mercy on us!—frightful bad.'

'There's no need he should. May the Lord a-mercy on him!' said the old butler.

'No, of course; and you're not to tell a soul, Cooper—not a living soul, mind, that I said he looked bad, nor nothing about it.'

'God forbid!' said old Cooper, shaking his head. 'But I was thinking, sir, it might ha' been about the slight that's bin so long put on him by having no stone over him, and never a scratch o' a chisel to say who he is.'

'Ay! Well, I didn't think o' that. Put on your hat, old Cooper, and come down wi' me; for I'll look after that, at any rate.'

There is a bye-path leading by a turnstile to the park, and thence to the picturesque old burying-place, which lies in a nook by the roadside, embowered in ancient trees. It was a fine autumnal sunset, and melancholy lights and long shadows spread their peculiar effects over the landscape as 'Handsome Charlie' and the old butler made their way slowly toward the place where Handsome Charlie was himself to lie at last.

'Which of the dogs made that howling all last

night?' asked the Squire, when they had got on a little way.

'Twas a strange dog, Master Charlie, in front of the house; ours was all in the yard—a white dog wi' a black head, he looked to be, and he was smelling round them mounting-steps the old master, God be wi' him! set up, the time his knee was bad. When the tyke got up a' top of them, howlin' up at the windows, I'd a liked to shy something at him.'

'Hullo! Is that like him?' said the Squire, stopping short, and pointing with his stick at a dirty-white dog, with a large black head, which was scampering round them in a wide circle, half-crouching with that air of uncertainty and deprecation which dogs so well know how to assume.

He whistled the dog up. He was a large half-starved bull-dog.

'That fellow has made a long journey—thin as a whipping-post, and stained all over, and his claws worn to the stumps,' said the Squire, musingly. 'He isn't a bad dog, Cooper. My poor father liked a good bull-dog, and knew a cur from a good 'un.'

The dog was looking up into the Squire's face with the peculiar grim visage of his kind, and the Squire was thinking irreverently how strong a likeness it presented to the character of his father's fierce pug features when he was clutching his horse-whip and swearing at a keeper.

'If I did right, I'd shoot him. He'll worry the cattle, and kill our dogs,' said the Squire. 'Hey, Cooper? I'll tell the keeper to look after him. That fellow could pull down a sheep, and he shan't live on my mutton.'

But the dog was not to be shaken off. He looked wistfully after the Squire, and after they had got a little way on, he followed timidly.

It was vain trying to drive him off. The dog ran round them in wide circles, like the infernal dog in 'Faust'; only he left no track of thin flame behind him. These manoeuvres were executed with a sort of beseeching air, which flattered and touched the object of this odd preference. So he called him up again, patted him, and then and there in a manner adopted him.

The dog now followed their steps dutifully, as if he had belonged to Handsome Charlie all his days. Cooper unlocked the little iron door, and the dog walked in close behind their heels, and followed them as they visited the roofless chapel.

The Marstons were lying under the floor of this little building in rows. There is not a vault. Each has his distinct grave enclosed in a lining of masonry. Each is surmounted by a stone kist, on the upper flag of which is enclosed his epitaph, except that of poor old Squire Toby. Over him was nothing but the grass and the line of masonry which indicate the site of the kist, whenever his family should afford him one like the rest.

'Well, it does look shabby. It's the elder brother's business; but if he won't, I'll see to it myself, and I'll take care, old boy, to cut sharp and deep in it, that the elder son having refused to lend a hand the stone was put there by the younger.'

They strolled round this little burial-ground. The sun was now below the horizon, and the red metallic glow from the clouds, still illuminated by the departed sun, mingled luridly with the twilight.

When Charlie peeped again into the little chapel, he saw the ugly dog stretched upon Squire Toby's grave, looking at least twice his natural length, and performing such antics as made the young Squire stare. If you have ever seen a cat stretched on the floor with a bunch of Valerian, straining, writhing, rubbing its jaws in long-drawn caresses, and in the absorption of a sensual ecstasy, you have seen a phenomenon resembling that which Handsome Charlie witnessed on looking in.

The head of the brute looked so large, its body so long and thin, and its joints so ungainly and dislocated, that the Squire, with old Cooper beside him, looked on with a feeling of disgust and astonishment, which, in a moment or two more, brought the Squire's stick down upon him with a couple of heavy thumps. The beast awakened from his ecstasy, sprang to the head of the grave, and there on a sudden, thick and bandy as before, confronted the Squire, who stood at its foot, with a terrible grin, and eyes that glared with the peculiar green of canine fury.

The next moment the dog was crouching abjectly at the Squire's feet.

'Well, he's a rum 'un!' said old Cooper, looking hard at him.

'I like him,' said the Squire.

'I don't,' said Cooper.

'But he shan't come in here again,' said the Squire.

'I shouldn't wonder if he was a witch,' said old Cooper, who remembered more tales of witchcraft than are now current in that part of the world.

'He's a good dog,' said the Squire, dreamily. 'I remember the time I'd a given a handful for him—but I'll never be good for nothing again. Come along.'

And he stooped down and patted him. So up jumped the dog and looked up in his face, as if watching for some sign, ever so slight, which he might obey.

Cooper did not like a bone in that dog's skin. He could not imagine what his master saw to admire in him. He kept him all night in the gun room, and the dog accompanied him in his halting rambles about the place. The fonder his master grew of him, the less did Cooper and the other servants like him.

'He hasn't a point of a good dog about him,' Cooper would growl. 'I think Master Charlie be blind. And old Captain' (an old red parrot, who sat chained to a perch in the oak parlour, and conversed with himself, and nibbled at his claws and bit his perch all day)—'old Captain, the only living thing, except one or two of us, and the Squire himself, that remembers the old master, the minute he saw the dog, screeched as if he was struck, shakin' his feathers out quite wild, and drops down, poor old soul, a hangin' by his foot in a fit.'

But there was no accounting for fancies, and the Squire was one of those dogged persons who persist more obstinately in their whims the more they are opposed. But Charles Marston's health suffered by his lameness. The transition from habitual and violent exercise to such a life as his privation now consigned him to, was never made without a risk to health; and a host of dyspeptic annoyances, the

existence of which he had never dreamed of before, now beset him in sad earnest. Among these was the now not unfrequent troubling of his sleep with dreams and nightmares. In these his canine favourite invariably had a part and was generally a central, and sometimes a solitary figure. In these visions the dog seemed to stretch himself up the side of the Squire's bed, and in dilated proportions to sit at his feet, with a horrible likeness to the pug features of the Squire Toby, with his tricks of wagging his head and throwing up his chin; and then he would talk to him about Scroope, and tell him 'all wasn't straight,' and that he 'must make it up wi' Scroope,' that he, the old Squire, had 'served him an ill turn,' that 'time was nigh up,' and that 'fair was fair,' and he was 'troubled where he was, about Scroope.'

Then in his dreams this semi-human brute would approach his face to his, crawling and crouching up his body, heavy as lead, till the face of the beast was laid on his, with the same odious caresses and stretchings and writhings which he had seen over the old Squire's grave. Then Charlie would wake up with a gasp and a howl, and start upright in the bed, bathed in a cold moisture, and fancy he saw something white sliding off the foot of the bed. Sometimes he thought it might be the curtain with white lining that slipped down, or the coverlet disturbed by his uneasy turnings; but he always fancied, at such moments, that he saw something white sliding hastily off the bed; and always when he had been visited by such dreams the dog next morning was more than usually caressing and servile, as if to obliterate, by a more than ordinary

welcome, the sentiment of disgust which the horror of the night had left behind it.

The doctor half-satisfied the Squire that there was nothing in these dreams, which, in one shape or another, invariably attended forms of indigestion such as he was suffering from.

For a while, as if to corroborate this theory, the dog ceased altogether to figure in them. But at last there came a vision in which, more unpleasantly than before, he did resume his old place.

In his nightmare the room seemed all but dark; he heard what he knew to be the dog walking from the door round his bed slowly, to the side from which he always had come upon it. A portion of the room was uncarpeted, and he said he distinctly heard the peculiar tread of a dog, in which the faint clatter of the claws is audible. It was a light stealthy step, but at every tread the whole room shook heavily; he felt something place itself at the foot of his bed, and saw a pair of green eyes staring at him in the dark, from which he could not remove his own. Then he heard, as he thought, the old Squire Toby say—'The eleventh hour be passed, Charlie, and ye've done nothing—you and I 'a done Scroope a wrong!' and then came a good deal more, and then—'The time's nigh up, it's going to strike.' And with a long low growl, the thing began to creep up upon his feet; the growl continued, and he saw the reflection of the up-turned green eyes upon the bed-clothes, as it began slowly to stretch itself up his body towards his face. With a loud scream, he waked. The light, which of late the Squire was accustomed to have in his bed-room, had accidentally gone out. He was afraid to get up, or even to look

about the room for some time; so sure did he feel of seeing the green eyes in the dark fixed on him from some corner. He had hardly recovered from the first agony which nightmare leaves behind it, and was beginning to collect his thoughts, when he heard the clock strike twelve. And he bethought him of the words 'the eleventh hour be passed—time 's nigh up—it 's going to strike!' and he almost feared that he would hear the voice reopening the subject.

Next morning the Squire came down looking ill.

'Do you know a room, old Cooper,' said he, 'they used to call King Herod's Chamber?'

'Ay, sir; the story of King Herod was on the walls o't when I was a boy.'

'There 's a closet off it—is there?'

'I can't be sure o' that; but 't isn't worth your looking at, now; the hangings was rotten, and took off the walls, before you was born; and there 's nou't there but some old broken things and lumber. I seed them put there myself by poor Twinks; he was blind of an eye, and footman afterwards. You'll remember Twinks? He died here, about the time o' the great snow. There was a deal o' work to bury him, poor fellow!'

'Get the key, old Cooper; I'll look at the room,' said the Squire.

'And what the devil can you want to look at it for?' said Cooper, with the old-world privilege of a rustic butler.

'And what the devil 's that to you? But I don't mind if I tell you. I don't want that dog in the gun-room, and I'll put him somewhere else; and I don't care if I put him there.'

'A bull-dog in a bed-room! Oons, sir! the folks 'ill say you're clean mad!'

'Well, let them; get you the key, and let us look at the room.'

'You'd shoot him if you did right, Master Charlie. You never heard what a noise he kept up all last night in the gun-room, walking to and fro growling like a tiger in a show; and, say what you like, the dog's not worth his feed; he hasn't a point of a dog; he's a bad dog.'

'I know a dog better than you—and he's a good dog!' said the Squire, testily.

'If you was a judge of a dog you'd hang that 'un,' said Cooper.

'I'm not a-going to hang him, so there's an end. Go you, and get the key; and don't be talking, mind, when you go down. I may change my mind.'

Now this freak of visiting King Herod's room had, in truth, a totally different object from that pretended by the Squire. The voice in his nightmare had uttered a particular direction, which haunted him, and would give him no peace until he had tested it. So far from liking that dog to-day, he was beginning to regard it with a horrible suspicion; and if old Cooper had not stirred his obstinate temper by seeming to dictate, I dare say he would have got rid of that inmate effectually before the evening.

Up to the third storey, long disused, he and old Cooper mounted. At the end of a dusty gallery, the room lay. The old tapestry, from which the spacious chamber had taken its name, had long given place to modern paper, and this was mildewed and in some places hanging from the walls. A thick

mantle of dust lay over the floor. Some broken chairs and boards, thick with dust, lay, along with other lumber, piled together at one end of the room.

They entered the closet, which was quite empty. The Squire looked round, and you could hardly have said whether he was relieved or disappointed.

'No furniture here,' said the Squire, and looked through the dusty window. 'Did you say anything to me lately—I don't mean this morning—about this room, or the closet—or anything—I forget—'

'Lor' bless you! Not I. I han't been thinkin' o' this room this forty year.'

'Is there any sort of old furniture called a *buffet*—do you remember?' asked the Squire.

'A buffet? why, yes—to be sure—there was a buffet, sure enough, in this closet, now you bring it to my mind,' said Cooper. 'But it's papered over.'

'And what is it?'

'A little cupboard in the wall,' answered the old man.

'Ho—I see—and there's such a thing here, is there, under the paper? Show me whereabouts it was.'

'Well—I think it was somewhere about here,' answered he, rapping his knuckles along the wall opposite the window. 'Ay, there it is,' he added, as the hollow sound of a wooden door was returned to his knock.

The Squire pulled the loose paper from the wall, and disclosed the doors of a small press, about two feet square, fixed in the wall.

'The very thing for my buckles and pistols, and the rest of my gimcracks,' said the Squire. 'Come

away, we'll leave the dog where he is. Have you the key of that little press?'

No, he had not. The old master had emptied and locked it up, and desired that it should be papered over, and that was the history of it.

Down came the Squire, and took a strong turn-screw from his gun-case; and quietly he reascended to King Herod's room, and, with little trouble, forced the door of the small press in the closet wall. There were in it some letters and cancelled leases, and also a parchment deed which he took to the window and read with much agitation. It was a supplemental deed executed about a fortnight after the others, and previously to his father's marriage, placing Gylingden under strict settlement to the elder son, in what is called 'tail male.' Handsome Charlie, in his fraternal litigation, had acquired a smattering of technical knowledge, and he perfectly well knew that the effect of this would be not only to transfer the house and lands to his brother Scroope, but to leave him at the mercy of that exasperated brother, who might recover from him personally every guinea he had ever received by way of rent, from the date of his father's death.

It was a dismal, clouded day, with something threatening in its aspect, and the darkness, where he stood, was made deeper by the top of one of the huge old trees overhanging the window.

In a state of awful confusion he attempted to think over his position. He placed the deed in his pocket, and nearly made up his mind to destroy it. A short time ago he would not have hesitated for a moment under such circumstances; but now his health and his nerves were shattered, and he was

under a supernatural alarm which the strange discovery of this deed had powerfully confirmed.

In this state of profound agitation he heard a sniffing at the closet-door, and then an impatient scratch and a long low growl. He screwed his courage up, and, not knowing what to expect, threw the door open and saw the dog, not in his dream-shape, but wriggling with joy, and crouching and fawning with eager submission; and then wandering about the closet, the brute growled awfully into the corners of it, and seemed in an unappeasable agitation.

Then the dog returned and fawned and crouched again at his feet.

After the first moment was over, the sensations of abhorrence and fear began to subside, and he almost reproached himself for requiting the affection of this poor friendless brute with the antipathy which he had really done nothing to earn.

The dog pattered after him down the stairs. Oddly enough, the sight of this animal, after the first revulsion, reassured him; it was, in his eyes, so attached, so good-natured, and palpably so mere a dog.

By the hour of evening the Squire had resolved on a middle course; he would not inform his brother of his discovery, nor yet would he destroy the deed. He would never marry. He was past that time. He would leave a letter, explaining the discovery of the deed, addressed to the only surviving trustee—who had probably forgotten everything about it—and having seen out his own tenure, he would provide that all should be set right after his death. Was not that fair? at all events it quite satisfied

what he called his conscience, and he thought it a devilish good compromise for his brother; and he went out, towards sunset, to take his usual walk.

Returning in the darkening twilight, the dog, as usual attending him, began to grow frisky and wild, at first, scampering round him in great circles, as before, nearly at the top of his speed, his great head between his paws as he raced. Gradually more excited grew the pace and narrower his circuit, louder and fiercer his continuous growl, and the Squire stopped and grasped his stick hard, for the lurid eyes and grin of the brute threatened an attack. Turning round and round as the excited brute encircled him, and striking vainly at him with his stick, he grew at last so tired that he almost despaired of keeping him longer at bay; when on a sudden the dog stopped short and crawled up to his feet wriggling and crouching submissively.

Nothing could be more apologetic and abject; and when the Squire dealt him two heavy thumps with his stick, the dog whimpered only, and writhed and licked his feet. The Squire sat down on a prostrate tree; and his dumb companion, recovering his wonted spirits immediately, began to sniff and nuzzle among the roots. The Squire felt in his breast pocket for the deed—it was safe; and again he pondered, in this loneliest of spots, on the question whether he should preserve it for restoration after his death to his brother, or destroy it forthwith. He began rather to lean toward the latter solution, when the long low growl of the dog not far off startled him.

He was sitting in a melancholy grove of old trees, that slants gently westward. Exactly the same odd

effect of light I have before described—a faint red glow reflected downward from the upper sky, after the sun had set, now gave to the growing darkness a lurid uncertainty. This grove, which lies in a gentle hollow, owing to its circumscribed horizon on all but one side, has a peculiar character of loneliness.

He got up and peeped over a sort of barrier, accidentally formed of the trunks of felled trees laid one over the other, and saw the dog straining up the other side of it, and hideously stretched out, his ugly head looking in consequence twice the natural size. His dream was coming over him again. And now between the trunks the brute's ungainly head was thrust, and the long neck came straining through, and the body, twining after it like a huge white lizard; and as it came striving and twisting through, it growled and glared as if it would devour him.

As swiftly as his lameness would allow, the Squire hurried from this solitary spot towards the house. What thoughts exactly passed through his mind as he did so, I am sure he could not have told. But when the dog came up with him it seemed appeased, and even in high good-humour, and no longer resembled the brute that haunted his dreams.

That night, near ten o'clock, the Squire, a good deal agitated, sent for the keeper, and told him that he believed the dog was mad, and that he must shoot him. He might shoot the dog in the gun-room where he was—a grain of shot or two in the wainscot did not matter, and the dog must not have a chance of getting out.

The Squire gave the gamekeeper his double-barrelled gun, loaded with heavy shot. He did not go with him beyond the hall. He placed his hand on the keeper's arm; the keeper said his hand trembled, and that he looked 'as white as curds.'

'Listen a bit!' said the Squire under his breath.

They heard the dog in a state of high excitement in the room—growling ominously, jumping on the window-stool and down again, and running round the room.

You'll need to be sharp, mind—don't give him a chance—slip in edgeways, d'ye see? and give him both barrels!

'Not the first mad dog I've knocked over, sir,' said the man, looking very serious as he cocked his gun.

As the keeper opened the door, the dog had sprung into the empty grate. He said he 'never see sich a stark, staring devil.' The beast made a twist round, as if, he thought, to jump up the chimney—'but that wasn't to be done at no price,'—and he made a yell—not like a dog—like a man caught in a mill-crank, and before he could spring at the keeper, he fired one barrel into him. The dog leaped towards him, and rolled over, receiving the second barrel in his head, as he lay snorting at the keeper's feet!

'I never seed the like; I never heard a screech like that!' said the keeper, recoiling. 'It makes a fellow feel queer.'

'Quite dead?' asked the Squire.

'Not a stir in him, sir,' said the man, pulling him along the floor by the neck.

'Throw him outside the hall-door now,' said the

Squire; 'and mind you pitch him outside the gate to-night—old Cooper says he's a witch,' and the pale Squire smiled, 'so he shan't lie in Gylingden.'

Never was man more relieved than the Squire, and he slept better for a week after this than he had done for many weeks before.

It behoves us all to act promptly on our good resolutions. There is a determined gravitation towards evil, which, if left to itself, will bear down first intentions. If at one moment of superstitious fear, the Squire had made up his mind to a great sacrifice, and resolved in the matter of that deed so strangely recovered, to act honestly by his brother, that resolution very soon gave place to the compromise with fraud, which so conveniently postponed the restitution to the period when further enjoyment on his part was impossible. Then came more tidings of Scroope's violent and minatory language, with always the same burthen—that he would leave no stone unturned to show that there had existed a deed which Charles had either secreted or destroyed, and that he would never rest till he had hanged him.

This of course was wild talk. At first it only enraged him; but, with his recent guilty knowledge and suppression, had come fear. His danger was the existence of the deed, and little by little he brought himself to a resolution to destroy it. There were many falterings and recoils before he could bring himself to commit this crime. At length, however, he did it, and got rid of the custody of that which at any time might become the instrument of disgrace and ruin. There was relief in this but also the new and terrible sense of actual guilt.

He had got pretty well rid of his supernatural qualms. It was a different kind of trouble that agitated him now.

But this night, he imagined, he was awakened by a violent shaking of his bed. He could see, in the very imperfect light, two figures at the foot of it, holding each a bed-post. One of these he half-fancied was his brother Scroope, but the other was the old Squire—of that he was sure—and he fancied that they had shaken him up from his sleep. Squire Toby was talking as Charlie wakened, and he heard him say:

‘Put out of our own house by you! It won’t hold for long. We’ll come in together, friendly, and stay. Forewarned, wi’ yer eyes open, ye did it; and now Scroope ’ll hang you! We’ll hang you together! Look at me, you devil’s limb.’

And the old Squire tremblingly stretched his face, torn with shot and bloody, and growing every moment more and more into the likeness of the dog, and began to stretch himself out and climb the bed over the foot-board; and he saw the figure at the other side, little more than a black shadow, begin also to scale the bed; and there was instantly a dreadful confusion and uproar in the room, and such a gabbling and laughing; he could not catch the words; but, with a scream, he woke, and found himself standing on the floor. The phantoms and the clamour were gone, but a crash and ringing of fragments was in his ears. The great china bowl, from which for generations the Marstons of Gylingden had been baptized, had fallen from the mantel-piece, and was smashed on the hearthstone.

‘I’ve bin dreamin’ all night about Mr. Scroop

I wouldn't wonder, old Cooper, if he was dead,' said the Squire, when he came down in the morning.

'God forbid! I was adreamed about him, too, sir; I dreamed he was dammin' and sinkin' about a hole was burnt in his coat, and the old master, God be wi' him! said—quite plain—I'd 'a swore 'twas himself—"Cooper, get up, ye d——d land-loupin' thief, and lend a hand to hang him—for he's a daft cur, and no dog o' mine." 'Twas the dog shot overnight, I do suppose, as was runnin' in my old head. I thought old master gied me a punch wi' his knuckles, and says I, wakenin' up, "At yer service, sir"; and for a while I couldn't get it out o' my head, master was in the room still.'

Letters from the town soon convinced the Squire that his brother Scroope, so far from being dead, was particularly active; and Charlie's attorney wrote to say, in serious alarm, that he had heard, accidentally, that he intended setting up a case, of a supplementary deed of settlement, of which he had secondary evidence, which would give him Gylingden. And at this menace Handsome Charlie snapped his fingers, and wrote courageously to his attorney; abiding what might follow with, however, a secret foreboding.

Scroope threatened loudly now, and swore after his bitter fashion, and reiterated his old promise of hanging that cheat at last. In the midst of these menaces and preparations, however, a sudden peace proclaimed itself: Scroope died, without time even to make provisions for a posthumous attack upon his brother. It was one of those cases of disease of the heart in which death is as sudden as by a bullet.

Charlie's exultation was undisguised. It was

shocking. Not, of course, altogether malignant. For there was the expansion consequent on the removal of a secret fear. There was also the comic piece of luck, that only the day before Scroope had destroyed his old will, which left to a stranger every farthing he possessed, intending in a day or two to execute another to the same person, charged with the express condition of prosecuting the suit against Charlie.

The result was, that all his possessions went unconditionally to his brother Charles as his heir. Here were grounds for abundance of savage elation. But there was also the deep-seated hatred of half a life of mutual and persistent aggression and revilings; and Handsome Charlie was capable of nursing a grudge, and enjoying a revenge with his whole heart.

He would gladly have prevented his brother's being buried in the old Gylngden chapel, where he wished to lie; but his lawyers doubted his power and he was not quite proof against the scandal which would attend his turning back the funeral, which would, he knew, be attended by some of the country gentry and others, with an hereditary regard for the Marstons.

But he warned his servants that not one of them was to attend it; promising, with oaths and curses not to be disregarded, that any one of them who did so, should find the door shut in his face on his return.

I don't think, with the exception of old Cooper, that the servants cared for this prohibition, except as it baulked a curiosity always strong in the solitude of the country. Cooper was very much vexed that the eldest son of the old Squire should be

buried in the old family chapel, and no sign of decent respect from Gylingden Hall. He asked his master, whether he would not, at least, have some wine and refreshments in the oak parlour, in case any of the country gentlemen who paid this respect to the old family should come up to the house? But the Squire only swore at him, told him to mind his own business, and ordered him to say, if such a thing happened, that he was out, and no preparations made, and, in fact, to send them away as they came. Cooper expostulated stoutly, and the Squire grew angrier; and after a tempestuous scene, took his hat and stick and walked out, just as the funeral descending the valley from the direction of the 'Old Angel Inn' came in sight.

Old Cooper prowled about disconsolately, and counted the carriages as well as he could from the gate. When the funeral was over, and they began to drive away, he returned to the hall, the door of which lay open, and as usual deserted. Before he reached it quite, a mourning coach drove up, and two gentlemen in black cloaks, and with crapes to their hats, got out, and without looking to the right or the left, went up the steps into the house. Cooper followed them slowly. The carriage had, he supposed gone round to the yard, for, when he reached the door, it was no longer there.

So he followed the two mourners into the house. In the hall he found a fellow-servant, who said he had seen two gentlemen in black cloaks pass through the hall, and go up the stairs without removing their hats, or asking leave of anyone. This was very odd, old Cooper thought, and a great liberty; so upstairs he went to make them out.

But he could not find them then, nor ever. And from that hour the house was troubled.

In a little time there was not one of the servants who had not something to tell. Steps and voices followed them sometimes in the passages, and tittering whispers, always minatory, scared them at corners of the galleries, or from dark recesses; so that they would return panic-stricken to be rebuked by thin Mrs. Beckett, who looked on such stories as worse than idle. But Mrs. Beckett herself, a short time after, took a very different view of the matter.

She had herself begun to hear these voices, and with this formidable aggravation, that they came always when she was at her prayers, which she had been punctual in saying all her life, and utterly interrupted them. She was scared at such moments by dropping words of sentences, which grew, as she persisted, into threats and blasphemies.

These voices were not always in the room. They called, as she fancied, through the walls, very thick in that old house, from the neighbouring apartments, sometimes on one side, sometimes on the other; sometimes they seemed to holloa from distant lobbies, and came muffled, but threateningly, through the long panelled passages. As they approached they grew furious, as if several voices were speaking together. Whenever, as I said, this worthy woman applied herself to her devotions, these horrible sentences came hurrying towards the door, and, in panic, she would start from her knees, and all then would subside except the thumping of her heart against her stays, and the dreadful tremors of her nerves.

What these voices said, Mrs. Beckett never could quite remember one minute after they had ceased speaking; one sentence chased another away; gibe and menace and impious denunciation, each hideously articulate, were lost as soon as heard. And this added to the effect of these terrifying mockeries and invectives, that she could not, by any effort, retain their exact import, although their horrible character remained vividly present to her mind.

For a long time the Squire seemed to be the only person in the house absolutely unconscious of these annoyances. Mrs. Beckett had twice made up her mind within the week to leave. A prudent woman however, who had been comfortable for more than twenty years in a place, thinks oftener than twice before she leaves it. She and old Cooper were the only servants in the house who remembered the good old housekeeping in Squire Toby's day. The others were few, and such as could hardly be accounted regular servants. Meg Dobbs, who acted as housemaid, would not sleep in the house, but walked home, in trepidation, to her father's, at the gate-house, under the escort of her little brother, every night. Old Mrs. Beckett, who was high and mighty with the make-shift servants of fallen Gylingden, let herself down all at once, and made Mrs. Kymes and the kitchen-maid move their beds into her large and faded room, and there, very frankly, shared her nightly terrors with them.

Old Cooper was testy and captious about these stories. He was already uncomfortable enough by reason of the entrance of the two muffled figures into the house, about which there could be no mis-

take. His own eyes had seen them. He refused to credit the stories of the women, and affected to think that the two mourners might have left the house and driven away, on finding no one to receive them.

Old Cooper was summoned at night to the oak parlour, where the Squire was smoking.

'I say, Cooper,' said the Squire, looking pale and angry, 'what for ha' you been frightenin' they crazy women wi' your plaguy stories? d—— me, if you see ghosts here it's no place for you, and it's time you should pack. I won't be left without servants. Here has been old Beckett, wi' the cook and the kitchen-maid, as white as pipe-clay, all in a row, to tell me I must have a parson to sleep among them, and preach down the devil! Upon my soul, you're a wise old body, filling their heads wi' maggots! and Meg goes down to the lodge every night, afeared to lie in the house—all your doing, wi' your old wives' stories,—ye withered old Tom o' Bedlam!'

'I'm not to blame, Master Charles. 'Tisn't along o' no stories o' mine, for I'm never done tellin' 'em it's all vanity and vapours. Mrs. Beckett 'ill tell you that, and there's been many a wry word betwixt us on the head o't. Whate'er I may *think*,' said old Cooper, significantly, and looking askance, with the sternness of fear in the Squire's face.

The Squire averted his eyes, and muttered angrily to himself, and turned away to knock the ashes out of his pipe on the hob, and then turning suddenly round upon Cooper again, he spoke, with a pale face, but not quite so angrily as before.

'I know you're no fool, old Cooper, when you like.

Suppose there was such a thing as a ghost here, don't you see, it ain't to them snipe-headed women it 'id go to tell its story. What ails you, man, that you should think aught about it, but just what I think? You had a good headpiece o' yer own once, Cooper, don't be you clappin' a gooscap over it, as my poor father used to say; d—— it, old boy, you mustn't let 'em be fools, settin' one another wild wi' their blether, and makin' the folk talk what they shouldn't, about Gylingden and the family. I don't think ye'd like that, old Cooper, I'm sure ye wouldn't. The women has gone out o' the kitchen, make up a bit o' fire, and get your pipe. I'll go to you, when I finish this one, and we'll smoke a bit together, and a glass o' brandy and water.'

Down went the old butler, not altogether unused to such condescensions in that disorderly and lonely household; and let not those who can choose their company, be too hard on the Squire who couldn't.

When he had got things tidy, as he said, he sat down in that big old kitchen, with his feet on the fender, the kitchen candle burning in a great brass candlestick, which stood on the deal table at his elbow, with the brandy bottle and tumblers beside it, and Cooper's pipe also in readiness. And these preparations completed, the old butler, who had remembered other generations and better times, fell into rumination, and so, gradually, into a deep sleep.

Old Cooper was half awakened by some one laughing low near his head. He was dreaming of old times in the Hall, and fancied one of the 'young gentlemen' going to play him a trick, and he mumbled something in his sleep, from which he was

awakened by a stern deep voice, saying, 'You wern't at the funeral; I might take your life, I'll take your ear.' At the same moment, the side of his head received a violent push, and he started to his feet. The fire had gone down, and he was chilled. The candle was expiring in the socket, and threw on the white wall long shadows, that danced up and down from the ceiling to the ground, and their black outlines he fancied resembled the two men in cloaks, whom he remembered with a profound horror.

He took the candle, with all the haste he could, getting along the passage, on whose walls the same dance of black shadows was continued, very anxious to reach his room before the light should go out. He was startled half out of his wits by the sudden clang of his master's bell, close over his head, ringing furiously.

'Ha, ha! There it goes—yes, sure enough,' said Cooper, reassuring himself with the sound of his own voice, as he hastened on, hearing more and more distinct every moment the same furious ringing. 'He's fell asleep, like me; that's it, and his lights is out, I lay you fifty——'

When he turned the handle of the door of the oak parlour, the Squire wildly called, 'Who's *there*?' in the tone of a man who expects a robber.

'It's me, old Cooper, all right, Master Charlie, you didn't come to the kitchen after all, sir.'

'I'm very bad, Cooper; I don't know how I've been. Did you meet anything?' asked the Squire.

'No,' said Cooper.

They stared on one another.

'Come here—stay here! Don't you leave me!

Look round the room, and say is all right; and gie us your hand, old Cooper, for I must hold it.' The Squire's was damp and cold, and trembled very much. It was not very far from day-break now.

After a time he spoke again: 'I 'a done many a thing I shouldn't; I'm not fit to go, and wi' God's blessin' I'll look to it—why shouldn't I? I'm as lame as old Billy—I'll never be able to do any good no more, and I'll give over drinking, and marry, as I ought to 'a done long ago—none o' yer fine ladies, but a good homely wench; there's Farmer Crump's youngest daughter, a good lass, and discreet. What for shouldn't I take her? She'd take care o' me, and wouldn't bring a head full o' romances here, and mantua-makers' trumpery, and I'll talk with the parson, and I'll do what's fair wi' everyone; and mind, I said I'm sorry for many a thing I 'a done.'

A wild cold dawn had by this time broken. The Squire, Cooper said, looked 'awful bad,' as he got his hat and stick, and sallied out for a walk, instead of going to his bed, as Cooper besought him, looking so wild and distracted, that it was plain his object was simply to escape from the house. It was twelve o'clock when the Squire walked into the kitchen, where he was sure of finding some of the servants, looking as if ten years had passed over him since yesterday. He pulled a stool by the fire, without speaking a word, and sat down. Cooper had sent to Applebury for the doctor, who had just arrived, but the Squire would not go to him. 'If he wants to see me, he may come here,' he muttered as often as Cooper urged him. So the doctor did

come, charily enough, and found the Squire very much worse than he had expected.

The Squire resisted the order to get to his bed. But the doctor insisted under a threat of death, at which his patient quailed.

'Well, I'll do what you say—only this—you must let old Cooper and Dick Keeper stay wi' me. I mustn't be left alone, and they must keep awake o' nights; and stay a while, do *you*. When I get round a bit, I'll go and live in a town. It's dull livin' here, now that I can't do nou't, as I used, and I'll live a better life, mind ye; ye heard me say that, and I don't care who laughs, and I'll talk wi' the parson. I like 'em to laugh, hang 'em, it's a sign I'm doin' right, at last.'

The doctor sent a couple of nurses from the County Hospital, not choosing to trust his patient to the management he had selected, and he went down himself to Gylingden to meet them in the evening. Old Cooper was ordered to occupy the dressing-room, and sit up at night, which satisfied the Squire, who was in a strangely excited state, very low, and threatened, the doctor said, with fever.

The clergyman came, an old, gentle, 'book-learned' man, and talked and prayed with him late that evening. After he had gone the Squire called the nurses to his bedside, and said:

'There's a fellow sometimes comes; you'll never mind him. He looks in at the door and beckons—a thin, hump-backed chap in mourning, wi' black gloves on; ye'll know him by his lean face, as brown as the wainscot: don't ye mind his smilin'. You don't go out to him, nor ask him in; he won't say

nout; and if he grows anger'd and looks awry at ye, don't ye be afeared, for he can't hurt ye, and he'll grow tired waitin', and go away; and for God's sake mind ye don't ask him in, nor go out after him!

The nurses put their heads together when this was over, and held afterwards a whispering conference with old Cooper. 'Law bless ye!—no, there's no madman in the house,' he protested; 'not a soul but what ye saw,—it's just a trifle o' the fever in his head—no more.'

The Squire grew worse as the night wore on. He was heavy and delirious, talking of all sorts of things—of wine, and dogs, and lawyers; and then he began to talk, as it were, to his brother Scroope. As he did so, Mrs. Oliver, the nurse, who was sitting up alone with him, heard, as she thought, a hand softly laid on the door-handle outside, and a stealthy attempt to turn it. 'Lord bless us! who's there?' she cried, and her heart jumped into her mouth, as she thought of the hump-backed man in black, who was to put in his head smiling and beckoning—'Mr. Cooper! sir! are you there?' she cried. 'Come here, Mr. Cooper, please—do, sir, quick!'

Old Cooper, called up from his doze by the fire, stumbled in from the dressing-room, and Mrs. Oliver seized him tightly as he emerged.

'The man with the hump has been atryin' the door, Mr. Cooper, as sure as I am here.' The Squire was moaning and mumbling in his fever, understanding nothing, as she spoke. 'No, no! Mrs. Oliver, ma'am, it's impossible, for there's no sich man in the house: what is Master Charlie sayin'?'

'He's saying *Scroope* every minute, whatever he

means by that, and—and—hisht!—listen—there's the handle again,' and, with a loud scream, she added—'Look at his head and neck in at the door!' and in her tremour she strained old Cooper in an agonizing embrace.

The candle was flaring, and there was a wavering shadow at the door that looked like the head of a man with a long neck, and a longish sharp nose, peeping in and drawing back.

'Don't be a d—— fool, ma'am!' cried Cooper, very white, and shaking her with all his might. 'It's only the candle, I tell you—nothing in life but that. Don't you see?' and he raised the light; 'and I'm sure there was no one at the door, and I'll try, if you let me go.'

The other nurse was asleep on a sofa, and Mrs. Oliver called her up in a panic, for company, as old Cooper opened the door. There was no one near it, but at the angle of the gallery was a shadow resembling that which he had seen in the room. He raised the candle a little, and it seemed to beckon with a long hand as the head drew back. 'Shadow from the candle!' exclaimed Cooper aloud, resolved not to yield to Mrs. Oliver's panic; and, candle in hand, he walked to the corner. There was nothing. He could not forbear peeping down the long gallery from this point, and as he moved the light, he saw precisely the same sort of shadow, a little further down, and as he advanced the same withdrawal, and beckon. 'Gammon!' said he; 'it is nout but the candle.' And on he went, growing half angry and half frightened at the persistency with which this ugly shadow—a literal shadow he was sure it was—presented itself. As he drew near the

point where it now appeared, it seemed to collect itself, and nearly dissolve in the central panel of an old carved cabinet which he was now approaching.

In the centre panel of this is a sort of boss carved into a wolf's head. The light fell oddly upon this, and the fugitive shadow seemed to be breaking up, and re-arranging itself as oddly. The eye-ball gleamed with a point of reflected light, which glittered also upon the grinning mouth, and he saw the long, sharp nose of Scroope Marston, and his fierce eye looking at him, he thought, with a steadfast meaning.

Old Cooper stood gazing upon this sight, unable to move, till he saw the face, and the figure that belonged to it, begin gradually to emerge from the wood. At the same time he heard voices approaching rapidly up a side gallery, and Cooper, with a loud 'Lord a-mercy on us!' turned and ran back again, pursued by a sound that seemed to shake the old house like a mighty gust of wind.

Into his master's room burst old Cooper, half wild with fear, and clapped the door and turned the key in a twinkling, looking as if he had been pursued by murderers.

'Did you hear it?' whispered Cooper, now standing near the dressing-room door. They all listened, but not a sound from without disturbed the utter stillness of night. 'God bless us! I doubt it's my old head that's gone crazy!' exclaimed Cooper.

He would tell them nothing but that he was himself 'an old fool,' to be frightened by their talk, and that 'the rattle of a window, or the dropping o' a pin' was enough to scare him now'; and so he

helped himself through that night with brandy, and sat up talking by his master's fire.

The Squire recovered slowly from his brain fever, but not perfectly. A very little thing, the doctor said, would suffice to upset him. He was not yet sufficiently strong to remove for change of scene and air, which were necessary for his complete restoration.

Cooper slept in the dressing-room, and was now his only nightly attendant. The ways of the invalid were odd: he liked, half sitting up in his bed, to smoke his churchwarden o' nights, and made old Cooper smoke, for company, at the fire-side. As the Squire and his humble friend indulged in it, smoking is a taciturn pleasure, and it was not until the Master of Gylingden had finished his third pipe that he essayed conversation, and when he did, the subject was not such as Cooper would have chosen.

'I say, old Cooper, look in my face, and don't be afeared to speak out,' said the Squire, looking at him with a steady, cunning smile; 'you know all this time, as well as I do, who's in the house. You needn't deny—hey?—Scroope and my father?'

'Don't you be talking like that, Charlie,' said old Cooper, rather sternly and frightened, after a long silence; still looking in his face, which did not change.

'What's the good o' shammin', Cooper? Scroope's took the hearin' o' yer right ear—you know he did. He's looking angry. He's nigh took my life wi' this fever. But he's not done wi' me yet, and he looks awful wicked. Ye saw him—ye know ye did.'

Cooper was awfully frightened, and the odd

smile on the Squire's lips frightened him still more. He dropped his pipe, and stood gazing in silence at his master, and feeling as if he were in a dream.

'If ye think so, ye should not be smiling like that,' said Cooper grimly.

'I'm tired, Cooper, and it's as well to smile as t'other thing; so I'll even smile while I can. You know what they mean to do wi' me. That's all I wanted to say. Now, lad, go on wi' yer pipe—I'm goin' asleep.'

So the Squire turned over in his bed, and lay down serenely, with his head on the pillow. Old Cooper looked at him, and glanced at the door, and then half-filled his tumbler with brandy, and drank it off, and felt better, and got to his bed in the dressing-room.

In the dead of night he was suddenly awakened by the Squire, who was standing, in his dressing-gown and slippers, by his bed.

'I've brought you a bit o' a present. I got the rents o' Hazelden yesterday, and ye'll keep that for yourself—it's a fifty—and give t'other to Nelly Carwell, to-morrow; I'll sleep the sounder; and I saw Scroope since; he's not such a bad 'un after all, old fellow! He's got a crape over his face—for I told him I couldn't bear it; and I'd do many a thing for him now. I never could stand shilly-shally. Good-night, old Cooper!'

And the Squire laid his trembling hand kindly on the old man's shoulder, and returned to his own room. 'I don't half like how he is. Doctor don't come half often enough. I don't like that queer smile o' his, and his hand was as cold as death. I hope in God his brain's not a turnin'!'

With these reflections, he turned to the pleasanter subject of his present, and at last fell asleep.

In the morning, when he went into the Squire's room, the Squire had left his bed. 'Never mind; he'll come back, like a bad shillin',' thought old Cooper, preparing the room as usual. But he did not return. Then began an uneasiness, succeeded by a panic, when it began to be plain that the Squire was not in the house. What had become of him? None of his clothes, but his dressing-gown and slippers, were missing. Had he left the house, in his present sickly state, in that garb? and, if so, could he be in his right senses; and was there a chance of his surviving a cold, damp night, so passed, in the open air?

Tom Edwards was up to the house, and told them, that, walking a mile or so that morning, at four o'clock—there being no moon—along with Farmer Nokes, who was driving his cart to market, in the dark, three men walked, in front of the horse, not twenty yards before them, all the way from near Gylingden Lodge to the burial-ground, the gate of which was opened for them from within, and the three men entered, and the gate was shut. Tom Edwards thought they were gone in to make preparation for a funeral of some member of the Marston family. But the occurrence seemed to Cooper, who knew there was no such thing, horribly ominous.

He now commenced a careful search, and at last bethought him of the lonely upper storey, and King Herod's chamber. He saw nothing changed there, but the closet door was shut, and, dark as was the morning, something, like a large white knot sticking out over the door, caught his eye.

The door resisted his efforts to open it for a time; some great weight forced it down against the floor; at length, however, it did yield a little, and a heavy crash, shaking the whole floor; and sending an echo flying through all the silent corridors, with a sound like receding laughter, half stunned him.

When he pushed open the door, his master was lying dead upon the floor. His cravat was drawn halter-wise tight round his throat, and had done its work well. The body was cold, and had been long dead.

In due course the coroner held his inquest, and the jury pronounced, 'that the deceased, Charles Marston, had died by his own hand, in a state of temporary insanity.' But old Cooper had his own opinion about the Squire's death, though his lips were sealed, and he never spoke about it. He went and lived for the residue of his days in York, where there are still people who remember him, a taciturn and surly old man, who attended church regularly, and also drank a little, and was known to have saved some money.

THE LADY IN THE MIRROR

By GEORGE MACDONALD

COSMO VON WEHRSTAHL was a student at the University of Prague. Though of a noble family, he was poor, and prided himself upon the independence that poverty gives; for what will not a man pride himself upon, when he cannot get rid of it? A favourite with his fellow students, he yet had no companions; and none of them had ever crossed the threshold of his lodging in the top of one of the highest houses in the old town. Indeed, the secret of much of that complaisance which recommended him to his fellows, was the thought of his unknown retreat, whither in the evening he could betake himself and indulge undisturbed in his own studies and reveries. These studies, besides those subjects necessary to his course at the University, embraced some less commonly known and approved; for in a secret drawer lay the works of Albertus Magnus and Cornelius Agrippa, along with others less read and more abstruse. As yet, however, he had followed these researches only from curiosity, and had turned them to no practical purpose.

His lodging consisted of one large low-ceiled room, singularly bare of furniture; for besides a couple of wooden chairs, a couch which served for dreaming on both by day and night, and a great press of black oak, there was very little in the room that could be called furniture. But curious instru-

ments were heaped in the corners; and in one stood a skeleton, half-leaning against the wall, half-supported by a string about its neck. One of its hands, all of fingers, rested on the heavy pommel of a great sword that stood beside it. Various weapons were scattered about over the floor. The walls were utterly bare of adornment; for the few strange things, such as a large dried bat with wings dispread, the skin of a porcupine, and a stuffed sea-mouse, could hardly be reckoned as such. But although his fancy delighted in vagaries like these, he indulged his imagination with far different fare. His mind had never yet been filled with an absorbing passion; but it lay like a still twilight open to any wind, whether the low breath that wafts but odours, or the storm that bows the great trees till they strain and creak. He saw everything as through a rose-coloured glass. When he looked from his window on the street below, not a maiden passed but she moved as in a story, and drew his thoughts after her till she disappeared in the vista. When he walked in the streets, he always felt as if reading a tale, into which he sought to weave every face of interest that went by; and every sweet voice swept his soul as with the wing of a passing angel. He was in fact a poet without words; the more absorbed and endangered, that the springing waters were dammed back into his soul, where, finding no utterance, they grew, and swelled, and undermined. He used to lie on his hard couch, and read a tale or a poem, till the book dropped from his hand; but he dreamed on, he knew not whether awake or asleep, until the opposite roof grew upon his sense and turned golden in the sun-

rise. Then he arose too; and the impulses of vigorous youth kept him ever active, either in study or in sport, until again the close of the day left him free; and the world of night, which had lain drowned in the cataract of the day, rose up in his soul, with all its stars, and dim-seen phantom shapes. But this could hardly last long. Some one form must sooner or later step within the charmed circle, enter the house of life, and compel the bewildered magician to kneel and worship.

One afternoon, towards dusk, he was wandering dreamily in one of the principal streets, when a fellow student roused him by a slap on the shoulder, and asked him to accompany him into a little back alley to look at some old armour which he had taken a fancy to possess. Cosmo was considered an authority in every matter pertaining to arms, ancient or modern. In the use of weapons, none of the students could come near him; and his practical acquaintance with some had principally contributed to establish his authority in reference to all. He accompanied him willingly. They entered a narrow alley, and thence a dirty little court, where a low arched door admitted them into a heterogeneous assemblage of everything musty, and dusty, and old, that could well be imagined. His verdict on the armour was satisfactory, and his companion at once concluded the purchase. As they were leaving the place, Cosmo's eye was attracted by an old mirror of an elliptical shape, which leaned against the wall, covered with dust. Around it was some curious carving, which he could see but very indistinctly by the glimmering light which the owner of the shop carried in his

hand. It was this carving that attracted his attention; at least so it appeared to him. He left the place, however, with his friend, taking no further notice of it. They walked together to the main street, where they parted and took opposite directions.

No sooner was Cosmo left alone, than the thought of the curious old mirror returned to him. A strong desire to see it more plainly arose within him, and he directed his steps once more towards the shop. The owner opened the door when he knocked, as if he had expected him. He was a little, old, withered man, with a hooked nose, and burning eyes constantly in a slow restless motion, and looking here and there as if after something that eluded them. Pretending to examine several other articles, Cosmo at last approached the mirror, and requested to have it taken down.

'Take it down yourself, master; I cannot reach it,' said the old man.

Cosmo took it down carefully, when he saw that the carving was indeed delicate and costly, being both of admirable design and execution; containing withal many devices which seemed to embody some meaning to which he had no clue. This, naturally, in one of his tastes and temperament, increased the interest he felt in the old mirror; so much, indeed, that he now longed to possess it, in order to study its frame at his leisure. He pretended, however, to want it only for use; and saying he feared the plate could be of little service, as it was rather old, he brushed away a little of the dust from its face, expecting to see a dull reflection within. His surprise was great when he found the

reflection brilliant, revealing a glass not only uninjured by age, but wondrously clear and perfect (should the whole correspond to this part) even for one newly from the hands of the maker. He asked carelessly what the owner wanted for the thing. The old man replied by mentioning a sum of money far beyond the reach of poor Cosmo, who proceeded to replace the mirror where it had stood before.

'You think the price too high?' said the old man.

'I do not know that it is too much for you to ask,' replied Cosmo; 'but it is far too much for me to give.'

The old man held up his light towards Cosmo's face. 'I like your look,' said he.

Cosmo could not return the compliment. In fact, now he looked closely at him for the first time, he felt a kind of repugnance to him, mingled with a strange feeling of doubt whether a man or a woman stood before him.

'What is your name?' he continued.

'Cosmo von Wehrstahl.'

'Ah, ah! I thought as much, I see your father in you. I knew your father very well, young sir. I dare say in some odd corners of my house, you might find some old things with his crest and cipher upon them still. Well, I like you: you shall have the mirror at the fourth part of what I asked for it; but upon one condition.'

'What is that?' said Cosmo; for, although the price was still a great deal for him to give, he could just manage it; and the desire to possess the mirror had increased to an altogether unaccountable degree, since it had seemed beyond his reach.

'That if you should ever want to get rid of it again, you will let me have the first offer.'

'Certainly,' replied Cosmo, with a smile; adding, 'a moderate condition indeed.'

'On your honour?' insisted the seller.

'On my honour,' said the buyer; and the bargain was concluded.

'I will carry it home for you,' said the old man, as Cosmo took it in his hands.

'No, no; I will carry it myself,' said he; for he had a peculiar dislike to revealing his residence to any one, and more especially to this person, to whom he felt every moment a greater antipathy.

'Just as you please,' said the old creature, and muttered to himself as he held his light at the door to show him out of the court: 'Sold for the sixth time! I wonder what will be the upshot of it this time. I should think my lady had enough of it by now!'

Cosmo carried his prize carefully home. But all the way he had an uncomfortable feeling that he was watched and dogged. Repeatedly he looked about, but saw nothing to justify his suspicions. Indeed, the streets were too crowded and too ill lighted to expose very readily a careful spy, if such there should be at his heels. He reached his lodging in safety, and leaned his purchase against the wall, rather relieved, strong as he was, to be rid of its weight; then, lighting his pipe, threw himself on the couch, and was soon lapt in the folds of one of his haunting dreams.

He returned home earlier than usual the next day, and fixed the mirror to the wall, over the hearth, at one end of his long room. He then carefully wiped away the dust from its face, and,

clear as the water of a sunny spring, the mirror shone out from beneath the envious covering. But his interest was chiefly occupied with the curious carving of the frame. This he cleaned as well as he could with a brush; and then he proceeded to a minute examination of its various parts, in the hope of discovering some index to the intention of the carver. In this, however, he was unsuccessful; and, at length, pausing with some weariness and disappointment, he gazed vacantly for a few moments into the depth of the reflected room. But ere long he said, half aloud: 'What a strange thing a mirror is! and what a wondrous affinity exists between it and a man's imagination! For this room of mine, as I beheld it in the glass, is the same, and yet not the same. It is not the mere representation of the room I live in, but it looks just as if I were reading about it in a story I like. All its commonness has disappeared. The mirror has lifted it out of the region of fact into the realm of art; and the very representing of it to me has clothed with interest that which was otherwise hard and bare; just as one sees with delight upon the stage the representation of a character from which one would escape in life as from something unendurably wearisome. But is it not rather that art rescues nature from the weary and sated regards of our senses, and the degrading injustice of our anxious everyday life, and, appealing to the imagination, which dwells apart, reveals Nature in some degree as she really is, and as she represents herself to the eye of the child, whose everyday life, fearless and unambitious, meets the true import of the wonder-teeming world around him, and rejoices

therein without questioning? That skeleton, now—I almost fear it, standing there so still, with eyes only for the unseen, like a watch-tower looking across all the waste of this busy world into the quiet regions of rest beyond. And yet I know every bone and every joint in it as well as my own fist. And that old battle-axe looks as if any moment it might be caught up by a mailed hand, and, borne forth by the mighty arm, go crashing through casque, and skull, and brain, invading the Unknown with yet another bewildered ghost. I should like to live in *that* room if I could only get into it.'

Scarcely had the half-moulded words floated from him, as he stood gazing into the mirror, when, striking him as with a flash of amazement that fixed him in his posture, noiseless and unannounced, glided suddenly through the door into the reflected room, with stately motion, yet reluctant and faltering step, the graceful form of a woman, clothed all in white. Her back only was visible as she walked slowly up to the couch in the further end of the room, on which she laid herself wearily, turning towards him a face of unutterable loveliness, in which suffering, and dislike, and a sense of compulsion, strangely mingled with the beauty. He stood without the power of motion for some moments, with his eyes irrecoverably fixed upon her; and even after he was conscious of the ability to move, he could not summon up courage to turn and look on her, face to face, in the veritable chamber in which he stood. At length, with a sudden effort, in which the exercise of the will was so pure, that it seemed involuntary, he turned his face to the couch. It was vacant. In bewilderment,

mingled with terror, he turned again to the mirror: there, on the reflected couch, lay the exquisite lady-form. She lay with closed eyes, whence two large tears were just welling from beneath the veiling lids; still as death, save for the convulsive motion of her bosom.

Cosmo himself could not have described what he felt. His emotions were of a kind that destroyed consciousness, and could never be clearly recalled. He could not help standing yet by the mirror, and keeping his eyes fixed on the lady, though he was painfully aware of his rudeness, and feared every moment that she would open hers, and meet his fixed regard. But he was, ere long, a little relieved; for, after a while, her eyelids slowly rose, and her eyes remained uncovered, but unemployed for a time; and when, at length, they began to wander about the room, as if languidly seeking to make some acquaintance with her environment, they were never directed towards him: it seemed nothing but what was in the mirror could affect her vision; and, therefore, if she saw him at all, it could only be his back, which, of necessity, was turned towards her in the glass. The two figures in the mirror could not meet face to face, except he turned and looked at her, present in his room; and, as she was not there, he concluded that if he were to turn towards the part in his room corresponding to that in which she lay, his reflection would either be invisible to her altogether, or at least it must appear to her to gaze vacantly towards her, and no meeting of the eyes would produce the impression of spiritual proximity. By-and-by her eyes fell upon the skeleton, and he saw her shudder and close them.

She did not open them again, but signs of repugnance continued evident on her countenance. Cosmo would have removed the obnoxious thing at once, but he feared to discompose her yet more by the assertion of his presence which the act would involve. So he stood and watched her. The eyelids yet shrouded the eyes, as a costly case the jewel within; the troubled expression gradually faded from the countenance, leaving only a faint sorrow behind; the features settled into an unchanging expression of rest; and by these signs, and the slow regular motion of her breathing, Cosmo knew that she slept. He could now gaze on her without embarrassment. He saw that her figure, dressed in the simplest robe of white, was worthy of her face; and so harmonious, that either the delicately moulded foot, or any finger, of the equally delicate hand, was an index to the whole. As she lay, her whole form manifested the relaxation of perfect repose. He gazed till he was weary, and at last seated himself near the new-found shrine, and mechanically took up a book, like one who watches by a sick-bed. But his eyes gathered no thoughts from the page before him. His intellect had been stunned by the bold contradiction, to its face, of all its experience, and now lay passive, without assertion, or speculation, or even conscious astonishment; while his imagination sent one wild dream of blessedness after another coursing through his soul. How long he sat he knew not; but at length he roused himself, rose, and, trembling in every portion of his frame, looked again into the mirror. She was gone. The mirror reflected faithfully what his room presented, and nothing more. It stood

there like a golden setting, whence the central jewel has been stolen away—like a night-sky without the glory of its stars. She had carried with her all the strangeness of the reflected room. It had sunk to the level of the one without. But when the first pangs of his disappointment had passed, Cosmo began to comfort himself with the hope that she might return, perhaps the next evening, at the same hour. Resolving that if she did, she should not at least be scared by the hateful skeleton, he removed that and several other articles of questionable appearance into a recess by the side of the hearth, whence they could not possibly cast any reflection into the mirror; and having made his poor room as tidy as he could, sought the solace of the open sky and of a night wind that had begun to blow, for he could not rest where he was. When he returned, somewhat composed, he could hardly prevail with himself to lie down on his bed; for he could not help feeling as if she had lain upon it; and for him to lie there would now be something like sacrilege. However, weariness prevailed; and laying himself on the couch, dressed as he was, he slept till day.

With a beating heart, beating till he could hardly breathe, he stood in dumb hope before the mirror, on the following evening. Again the reflected room shone as through a purple vapour in the gathering twilight. Everything seemed waiting like himself for a coming splendour to glorify its poor earthliness with the presence of a heavenly joy. And just as the room vibrated with the strokes of the neighbouring church bells, announcing the hour of six, in glided the pale beauty, and again laid

herself on the couch. Poor Cosmo nearly lost his senses with delight. She was there once more! Her eyes sought the corner where the skeleton had stood, and a faint gleam of satisfaction crossed her face, apparently at seeing it empty. She looked suffering still, but there was less of discomfort expressed in her countenance than there had been the night before. She took more notice of the things about her, and seemed to gaze with some curiosity on the strange apparatus standing here and there in her room. At length, however, drowsiness seemed to overtake her, and again she fell asleep. Resolved not to lose sight of her this time, Cosmo watched the sleeping form. Her slumber was so deep and absorbing that a fascinating repose seemed to pass contagiously from her to him as he gazed upon her; and he started as if from a dream, when the lady moved, and, without opening her eyes, rose, and passed from the room with the gait of a somnambulist.

Cosmo was now in a state of extravagant delight. Most men have a secret treasure somewhere. The miser has his golden hoard; the virtuoso his pet ring; the student his rare book; the poet his favourite haunt; the lover his secret drawer; but Cosmo had a mirror with a lovely lady in it. And now that he knew by the skeleton, that she was affected by the things around her, he had a new object in life: he would turn the bare chamber in the mirror into a room such as no lady need disdain to call her own. This he could effect only by furnishing and adorning his. And Cosmo was poor. Yet he possessed accomplishments that could be turned to account; although, hitherto, he had preferred living on his

slender allowance, to increasing his means by what his pride considered unworthy of his rank. He was the best swordsman in the University; and now he offered to give lessons in fencing and similar exercises, to such as chose to pay him well for the trouble. His proposal was heard with surprise by the students; but it was eagerly accepted by many; and soon his instructions were not confined to the richer students, but were anxiously sought by many of the young nobility of Prague and its neighbourhood. So that very soon he had a good deal of money at his command. The first thing he did was to remove his apparatus and oddities into a closet in the room. Then he placed his bed and a few other necessities on each side of the hearth, and parted them from the rest of the room by two screens of Indian fabric. Then he put an elegant couch for the lady to lie upon, in the corner where his bed had formerly stood; and, by degrees, every day adding some article of luxury, converted it, at length, into a rich boudoir.

Every night, about the same time, the lady entered. The first time she saw the new couch, she started with a half-smile; then her face grew very sad, the tears came to her eyes, and she laid herself upon the couch, and pressed her face into the silken cushions, as if to hide from everything. She took notice of each addition and each change as the work proceeded; and a look of acknowledgement, as if she knew that some one was ministering to her, and was grateful for it, mingled with the constant look of suffering. At length, after she had lain down as usual one evening, her eyes fell upon some paintings with which Cosmo had just finished adorning the

walls. She rose, and to his great delight, walked across the room, and proceeded to examine them carefully, testifying much pleasure in her looks as she did so. But again the sorrowful, tearful expression returned, and again she buried her face in the pillows of her couch. Gradually, however, her countenance had grown more composed; much of the suffering manifest on her first appearance had vanished, and a kind of quiet, hopeful expression had taken its place; which, however, frequently gave way to an anxious, troubled look, mingled with something of sympathetic pity.

Meantime, how fared Cosmo? As might be expected in one of his temperament, his interest had blossomed into love, and his love—shall I call it *ripened*, or—*withered* into passion. But, alas! he loved a shadow. He could not come near her, could not speak to her, could not hear a sound from those sweet lips, to which his longing eyes would cling like bees to their honey-fountains. Ever and anon he sang to himself:

‘I shall die for love of the maiden;’

and ever he looked again, and died not, though his heart seemed ready to break with intensity of life and longing. And the more he did for her, the more he loved her; and he hoped that, although she never appeared to see him, yet she was pleased to think that one unknown would give his life to her. He tried to comfort himself over his separation from her, by thinking that perhaps some day she would see him and make signs to him, and that would satisfy him; ‘for,’ thought he, ‘is not this all that a loving soul can do to enter into communion

with another? Nay, how many who love never come nearer than to behold each other as in a mirror; seem to know and yet never know the inward life; never enter the other soul; and part at last, with but the vaguest notion of the universe on the borders of which they have been hovering for years? If I could but speak to her, and knew that she heard me, I should be satisfied.' Once he contemplated painting a picture on the wall, which should, of necessity, convey to the lady a thought of himself; but, though he had some skill with the pencil, he found his hand tremble so much when he began the attempt, that he was forced to give it up.

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'Who lives, he dies; who dies, he is alive.'

One evening, as he stood gazing on his treasure, he thought he saw a faint expression of self-consciousness on her countenance, as if she surmised that passionate eyes were fixed upon her. This grew; till at last the red blood rose over her neck, and cheek, and brow. Cosmo's longing to approach her became almost delirious. This night she was dressed in an evening costume, resplendent with diamonds. This could add nothing to her beauty, but it presented it in a new aspect; enabled her loveliness to make a new manifestation of itself in a new embodiment. For essential beauty is infinite; and, as the soul of Nature needs an endless succession of varied forms to embody her loveliness, countless faces of beauty springing forth, not any two the same, at any one of her heart-throbs; so the individual form needs an infinite change of its environments, to enable it to uncover all the phases

of its loveliness. Diamonds glittered from amidst her hair, half hidden in its luxuriance, like stars through dark rain-clouds; and the bracelets on her white arms flashed all the colours of a rainbow of lightnings, as she lifted her snowy hands to cover her burning face. But her beauty shone down all its adornment. 'If I might have but one of her feet to kiss,' thought Cosmo, 'I should be content.' Alas! he deceived himself, for passion is never content. Nor did he know that there are *two* ways out of her enchanted house. But, suddenly, as if the pang had been driven into his heart from without, revealing itself first in pain, and afterwards in definite form, the thought darted into his mind, 'She has a lover somewhere. Remembered words of his bring the colour on her face now. I am nowhere to her. She lives in another world all day, and all night, after she leaves me. Why does she come and make me love her, till I, a strong man, am too faint to look upon her more?' He looked again, and her face was pale as a lily. A sorrowful compassion seemed to rebuke the glitter of the restless jewels, and the slow tears rose in her eyes. She left her room sooner this evening than was her wont. Cosmo remained alone, with a feeling as if his bosom had been suddenly left empty and hollow, and the weight of the whole world was crushing in its walls. The next evening, for the first time since she began to come, she came not.

And now Cosmo was in wretched plight. Since the thought of a rival had occurred to him, he could not rest for a moment. More than ever he longed to see the lady face to face. He persuaded himself that if he but knew the worst he would be satisfied;

for then he could abandon Prague, and find that relief in constant motion, which is the hope of all active minds when invaded by distress. Meantime he waited with unspeakable anxiety for the next night, hoping she would return; but she did not appear. And now he fell really ill. Rallied by his fellow students on his wretched looks, he ceased to attend the lectures. His engagements were neglected. He cared for nothing. The sky, with the great sun in it, was to him a heartless, burning desert. The men and women in the streets were mere puppets, without motives in themselves, or interest to him. He saw them all as on the ever-changing field of a *camera obscura*. She—she alone and altogether—was his universe, his well of life, his incarnate good. For six evenings she came not. Let his absorbing passion, and the slow fever that was consuming his brain, be his excuse for the resolution which he had taken and begun to execute, before that time had expired.

Reasoning with himself, that it must be by some enchantment connected with the mirror, that the form of the lady was to be seen in it, he determined to attempt to turn to account what he had hitherto studied principally from curiosity. 'For,' said he to himself, 'if a spell can force her presence in that glass (and she came unwillingly at first), may not a stronger spell, such as I know, especially with the aid of her half-presence in the mirror, if ever she appears again, compel her living form to come to me here? If I do her wrong, let love be my excuse. I want only to know my doom from her own lips.' He never doubted, all the time, that she was a real earthly woman; or, rather, that there was a

woman, who, somehow or other, threw this reflection of her form into the magic mirror.

He opened his secret drawer, took out his books of magic, lighted his lamp, and read and made notes from midnight till three in the morning, for three successive nights. Then he replaced his books; and the next night went out in quest of the materials necessary for the conjuration. These were not easy to find; for, in love-charms and all incantations of this nature, ingredients are employed scarcely fit to be mentioned, and for the thought even of which, in connexion with her, he could only excuse himself on the score of his bitter need. At length he succeeded in procuring all he required; and on the seventh evening from that on which she had last appeared, he found himself prepared for the exercise of unlawful and tyrannical power.

He cleared the centre of the room; stooped and drew a circle of red on the floor, around the spot where he stood; wrote in the four quarters mystical signs, and numbers which were all powers of seven or nine; examined the whole ring carefully, to see that no smallest break had occurred in the circumference; and then rose from his bending posture. As he rose, the church clock struck seven; and, just as she had appeared the first time, reluctant, slow, and stately, glided in the lady. Cosmo trembled; and when, turning, she revealed a countenance worn and wan, as with sickness or inward trouble, he grew faint, and felt as if he dared not proceed. But as he gazed on the face and form, which now possessed his whole soul, to the exclusion of all other joys and griefs, the longing to speak to her,

to know that she heard him, to hear from her one word in return, became so unendurable, that he suddenly and hastily resumed his preparations. Stepping carefully from the circle, he put a small brazier into its centre. He then set fire to its contents of charcoal, and while it burned up, opened his window and seated himself, waiting, beside it.

It was a sultry evening. The air was full of thunder. A sense of luxurious depression filled the brain. The sky seemed to have grown heavy, and to compress the air beneath it. A kind of purplish tinge pervaded the atmosphere, and through the open window came the scents of the distant fields, which all the vapours of the city could not quench. Soon the charcoal glowed. Cosmo sprinkled upon it the incense and other substances which he had compounded, and, stepping within the circle, turned his face from the brazier and towards the mirror. Then, fixing his eyes upon the face of the lady, he began with a trembling voice to repeat a powerful incantation. He had not gone far, before the lady grew pale; and then, like a returning wave, the blood washed all its banks with its crimson tide, and she hid her face in her hands. Then he passed to a conjuration stronger yet. The lady rose and walked uneasily to and fro in her room. Another spell; and she seemed seeking with her eyes for some object on which they wished to rest. At length it seemed as if she suddenly espied him; for her eyes fixed themselves full and wide upon his, and she drew gradually, and somewhat unwillingly, close to her side of the mirror, just as if his eyes had fascinated her. Cosmo had never seen her so near before. Now at least, eyes met eyes; but he could

not quite understand the expression of hers. They were full of tender entreaty, but there was something more that he could not interpret. Though his heart seemed to labour in his throat, he would allow no delight or agitation to turn him from his task. Looking still in her face, he passed on to the mightiest charm he knew. Suddenly the lady turned and walked out of the door of her reflected chamber. A moment after she entered his room with veritable presence; and, forgetting all his precautions, he sprang from the charmed circle, and knelt before her. There she stood, the living lady of his passionate visions, alone beside him, in a thundery twilight, and the glow of a magic fire.

‘Why,’ said the lady, with a trembling voice, ‘didst thou bring a poor maiden through the rainy streets alone?’

‘Because I am dying for love of thee; but I only brought thee from the mirror there.’

‘Ah, the mirror!’ and she looked up at it, and shuddered. ‘Alas! I am but a slave, while that mirror exists. But do not think it was the power of thy spells that drew me; it was thy longing desire to see me, that beat at the door of my heart, till I was forced to yield.’

‘Canst thou love me then?’ said Cosmo, in a voice calm as death, but almost inarticulate with emotion.

‘I do not know,’ she replied sadly; ‘that I cannot tell, so long as I am bewildered with enchantments. It were indeed a joy too great, to lay my head on thy bosom and weep to death; for I think thou lovest me, though I do not know;—but——’

Cosmo rose from his knees.

'I love thee as—nay, I know not what—for since I have loved thee, there is nothing else.'

He seized her hand: she withdrew it.

'No, better not; I am in thy power, and therefore I may not.'

She burst into tears, and kneeling before him in her turn, said—

'Cosmo, if thou lovest me, set me free, even from thyself; break the mirror.'

'And shall I see thyself instead?'

'That I cannot tell, I will not deceive thee; we may never meet again.'

A fierce struggle arose in Cosmo's bosom. Now she was in his power. She did not dislike him at least; and he could see her when he would. To break the mirror would be to destroy his very life, to banish out of his universe the only glory it possessed. The whole world would be but a prison if he annihilated the one window that looked into the paradise of love. Not yet pure in love, he hesitated.

With a wail of sorrow the lady rose to her feet. 'Ah! he loves me not; he loves me not even as I love him; and alas! I care more for his love than even for the freedom I ask.'

'I will not wait to be willing,' cried Cosmo; and sprang to the corner where the great sword stood.

Meantime it had grown very dark; only the embers cast a red glow through the room. He seized the sword by the steel scabbard, and stood before the mirror; but as he heaved a great blow at it with the heavy pommel, the blade slipped half-way out of the scabbard, and the pommel struck the wall above the mirror. At that moment, a terrible clap of thunder seemed to burst in the very

room beside them; and ere Cosmo could repeat the blow, he fell senseless on the hearth. When he came to himself, he found that the lady and the mirror had both disappeared. He was seized with a brain fever, which kept him to his couch for weeks.

When he recovered his reason, he began to think what could have become of the mirror. For the lady, he hoped she had found her way back as she came; but as the mirror involved her fate with its own, he was more immediately anxious about that. He could not think she had carried it away. It was much too heavy, even if it had not been too firmly fixed in the wall, for her to remove it. Then again, he remembered the thunder; which made him believe that it was not the lightning but some other blow that had struck him down. He concluded that, either by supernatural agency, he having exposed himself to the vengeance of the demons in leaving the circle of safety, or in some other mode, the mirror had probably found its way back to its former owner; and, horrible to think of, might have been by this time once more disposed of, delivering up the lady into the power of another man; who, if he used his power no worse than he himself had done, might yet give Cosmo abundant cause to curse the selfish indecision which prevented him from shattering the mirror at once. Indeed, to think that she whom he loved, and who had prayed to him for freedom, should be still at the mercy, in some degree, of the possessor of the mirror, and was at least exposed to his constant observation, was in itself enough to madden a chary lover.

Anxiety to be well retarded his recovery; but at length he was able to creep abroad. He first made

his way to the old broker's, pretending to be in search of something else. A laughing sneer on the creature's face convinced him that he knew all about it; but he could not see it amongst his furniture, or get any information out of him as to what had become of it. He expressed the utmost surprise at hearing it had been stolen, a surprise which Cosmo saw at once to be counterfeited; while, at the same time, he fancied that the old wretch was not at all anxious to have it mistaken for genuine. Full of distress, which he concealed as well as he could, he made many searches, but with no avail. Of course he could ask no questions; but he kept his ears awake for any remotest hint that might set him in a direction of search. He never went out without a short heavy hammer of steel about him, that he might shatter the mirror the moment he was made happy by the sight of his lost treasure, if ever that blessed moment should arrive. Whether he should see the lady again, was now a thought altogether secondary, and postponed to the achievement of her freedom. He wandered here and there, like an anxious ghost, pale and haggard; gnawed ever at the heart, by the thought of what she might be suffering—all from his fault.

One night, he mingled with a crowd that filled the rooms of one of the most distinguished mansions in the city; for he accepted every invitation, that he might lose no chance, however poor, of obtaining some information that might expedite his discovery. Here he wandered about, listening to every stray word that he could catch, in the hope of a revelation. As he approached some ladies who were talking quietly in a corner, one said to another: 'Have

you heard of the strange illness of the Princess von Hohenweiss?’

‘Yes; she has been ill for more than a year now. It is very sad for so fine a creature to have such a terrible malady. She was better for some weeks lately, but within the last few days the same attacks have returned, apparently accompanied with more suffering than ever. It is altogether an inexplicable story.’

‘Is there a story connected with her illness?’

‘I have only heard imperfect reports of it; but it is said that she gave offence some eighteen months ago to an old woman who had held an office of trust in the family, and who, after some incoherent threats, disappeared. This peculiar affection followed soon after. But the strangest part of the story is its association with the loss of an antique mirror, which stood in her dressing-room, and of which she constantly made use.’

Here the speaker’s voice sank to a whisper; and Cosmo, although his very soul sat listening in his ears, could hear no more. He trembled too much to dare to address the ladies, even if it had been advisable to expose himself to their curiosity. The name of the Princess was well known to him, but he had never seen her; except indeed it was she, which now he hardly doubted, who had knelt before him on that dreadful night. Fearful of attracting attention, for, from the weak state of his health, he could not recover an appearance of calmness, he made his way to the open air, and reached his lodgings; glad in this, that he at least knew where she lived, although he never dreamed of approaching her openly, even if he should be happy enough

to free her from her hateful bondage. He hoped, too, that as he had unexpectedly learned so much, the other and far more important part might be revealed to him ere long.

‘Have you seen Steinwald lately?’

‘No, I have not seen him for some time. He is almost a match for me at the rapier, and I suppose he thinks he needs no more lessons.’

‘I wonder what has become of him. I want to see him very much. Let me see; the last time I saw him he was coming out of that old broker’s den, to which, if you remember, you accompanied me once, to look at some armour. That is fully three weeks ago.’

This hint was enough for Cosmo. Von Steinwald was a man of influence in the court, well known for his reckless habits and fierce passions. The very possibility that the mirror should be in his possession was hell itself to Cosmo. But violent or hasty measures of any sort were most unlikely to succeed. All that he wanted was an opportunity of breaking the fatal glass; and to obtain this he must bide his time. He revolved many plans in his mind, but without being able to fix upon any.

At length, one evening, as he was passing the house of Von Steinwald, he saw the windows more than usually brilliant. He watched for a while, and seeing that company began to arrive, hastened home, and dressed as richly as he could, in the hope of mingling with the guests unquestioned: in effecting which, there could be no difficulty for a man of his carriage.

In a lofty, silent chamber, in another part of the

city, lay a form more like marble than a living woman. The loveliness of death seemed frozen upon her face, for her lips were rigid, and her eyelids closed. Her long white hands were crossed over her breast, and no breathing disturbed their repose. Beside the dead, men speak in whispers, as if the deepest rest of all could be broken by the sound of a living voice. Just so, though the soul was evidently beyond the reach of all intimations from the senses, the two ladies, who sat beside her, spoke in the gentlest tones of subdued sorrow.

'She has lain so for an hour.'

'This cannot last long, I fear.'

'How much thinner she has grown within the last few weeks! If she would only speak, and explain what she suffers, it would be better for her. I think she has visions in her trances, but nothing can induce her to refer to them when she is awake.'

'Does she ever speak in these trances?'

'I have never heard her; but they say she walks sometimes, and once put the whole household in a terrible fright by disappearing for a whole hour, and returning drenched with rain, and almost dead with exhaustion and fright. But even then she would give no account of what had happened.'

A scarce audible murmur from the yet motionless lips of the lady here startled her attendants. After several ineffectual attempts at articulation, the word '*Cosmo!*' burst from her. Then she lay still as before; but only for a moment. With a wild cry, she sprang from the couch erect on the floor, flung her arms above her head, with clasped and straining hands, and, her wide eyes flashing with light, called aloud, with a voice exultant as

that of a spirit bursting from a sepulchre, 'I am free! I am free! I thank thee!' Then she flung herself on the couch, and sobbed; then rose, and paced wildly up and down the room, with gestures of mingled delight and anxiety. Then turning to her motionless attendants—'Quick, Lisa, my cloak and hood!' Then lower—'I must go to him. Make haste, Lisa! You may come with me if you will.'

In another moment they were in the street, hurrying along towards one of the bridges over the Moldau. The moon was near the zenith, and the streets were almost empty. The Princess soon outstripped her attendant, and was half-way over the bridge, before the other reached it.

'Are you free, lady? The mirror is broken: are you free?'

The words were spoken close beside her, as she hurried on. She turned; and there, leaning on the parapet in a recess of the bridge, stood Cosmo, in a splendid dress, but with a white and quivering face.

'Cosmo!—I am free—and thy servant for ever. I was coming to you now.'

'And I to you, for Death made me bold; but I could get no further. Have I atoned at all? Do I love you a little—truly?'

'Ah, I know now that you love me, my Cosmo; but what do you say about death?'

He did not reply. His hand was pressed against his side. She looked more closely: the blood was welling from between the fingers. She flung her arms around him with a faint bitter wail.

When Lisa came up, she found her mistress kneeling above a wan dead face, which smiled on in the spectral moonbeams.

THE CASE OF MR. LUCRAFT

By SIR WALTER BESANT and JAMES RICE

I

I HAVE often told the story of the only remarkable thing which has happened to me in the course of a longish life. No one has ever believed me; I wish, therefore, to leave behind me a truthful record, in which everything shall be set down, as near as I can remember it, just as it happened. I am sure I need not add a single fact. The more I consider the story, the more I realise to myself my wonderful escape and the frightful consequences which a providential accident averted from my head, the more reason I feel to be grateful and humble.

I have read of nothing similar to my own case. I have consulted books on apparitions, witchcraft, and the power of the devil as manifested in authentic history, but I have found absolutely nothing that can in any way compare with my own case. If there be any successor to Mr. Grumbelow, possessed of his unholy powers, endowed with his fiendish and diabolical iniquity of selfishness, this plain and simple narrative may serve as a warning to young men situated as I was in the year 1823. Except as a moral example, indeed, I see no use in telling the story at all.

I have never been a rich man, but I was once very poor, and it is of this period that I have to write.

As for my parentage, that matters nothing, enough that it was quite obscure. My mother died

when I was still a boy; and my father, who was not a man to be proud of as a father, had long before run away from her and disappeared. He was a sailor by profession, and I have heard it rumoured he possessed a wife in every port, besides a few who lived, like my mother, inland; so that he would vary the surroundings when he wished. All properly married in church too, and honest women, every one of them. What became of him I never knew, nor did I ever inquire.

I went through a pretty fair number of adventures before I settled down to my first serious profession. I was travelling companion and drudge to an itinerant tinker, who treated me as kindly as could be expected when he was sober. When he was drunk he used to throw the pots and pans at my head. Then I became cabin-boy, but only for a single voyage, on board a collier. The ship belonged to a philanthropist, who was too much occupied with the wrongs of the niggers to think about the rights of his own sailors; so his ships, insured far above their real value, were sent to sea to sink or swim as it might please Providence. I suppose no cabin-boy ever had so many kicks and cuffs in a single voyage as I had. However, my ship carried me safely from South Shields to the port of London. There I ran away, and I heard afterwards that on her return voyage the *Spanking Sally* foundered with all hands. In the minds of those who knew the captain and his crew, there were doubtless, as in mine, grave fears as to their ultimate destination. After that I became steward in an Atlantic packet for a couple of years; then clerk to a bogus auctioneer in New York; cashier

to a store; all sorts of things, but nothing long. Then I came back to England, and not knowing what to do with myself, joined a strolling company of actors in the general utility line. It was not exactly promotion, but I liked the life; I liked the work; I liked the applause; I liked wandering about from town to town; I even liked, being young and a fool, the precarious nature of the salary. Heaven knows mine was small enough; but we were a cheery company, and one or two members subsequently rose to distinction. If we had known any history, which we did not, we might have remembered that Molière himself was once a stroller through France. Some people think it philosophical to reflect, when they are hard up, how many great men have been hard up too. It would have brought no comfort to me. Practically I felt little inconvenience from poverty, save in the matter of boots. We went share and share alike, most of us, and there was always plenty to eat even for my naturally gigantic appetite. Juliet, a delicate eater, always used to reckon me as equal to four.

Juliet was the manager's daughter—Juliet Kerrans, acting as Miss Juliet Alvanley. She was eighteen and I was twenty-three, an inflammable and romantic time of life. We were thrown a good deal together too, not only off the stage but on it. I was put into parts to play up to her. I was Romeo when she played her namesake, a part sustained by her mother till even she herself was bound to own that she was too fat to play it any longer; she was Lady Teazle and I was Charles Surface; she was Rosalind and I Orlando; she was Angelina and I Sir Harry Wildair. We were a pair, and looked well in love

scenes. Looking back dispassionately on our performances, I suppose they must have been as bad as stage-acting could well be. At least, we had no training, and nothing but a few fixed rules to guide us; these, of course, quite stagey and conventional. Juliet had been on the stage all her life, and did not want in assurance; I, however, was nervous and uncertain. Then we were badly mounted and badly dressed; we were ambitious, we ranted, and we tore a passion to rags. But we had one or two good points—we were young and lively. Juliet had the most charming of faces and the most delicious of figures—mind you, in the year 1823, girls had a chance of showing their figures without putting on a page's costume. Then she had a soft, sweet voice, and pretty little coquettish ways, which came natural to her, and broke through all the clumsy stage artificialities. She drew full houses; wherever we performed, the men, especially young officers, used to come after her. They wrote her notes, they lay in wait for her, they sent her flowers; but what with old Kerrans and myself, to say nothing of the other members of the company, they might as well have tried to get at the Peri in Paradise. I drew pretty well too. I was—a man of seventy and more may say so—I was a good-looking young fellow; you would hardly believe what quantities of letters and *billets-doux* came to me. I had dozens, but Juliet found them and tore them all up. There they were; the note on rose-coloured note-paper with violet ink, beginning with 'Handsomest and noblest of men,' and ending with 'Your fair unknown, Araminta.' There was the letter from the middle-

aged widow with a taste for the drama and an income; and there was the vilely spelled note from the foolish little milliner who had fallen in love with the Romeo of a barn. Perhaps ladies are more sensible now. At all events, their letters were thrown away upon me, because I was in love, head over ears, with Juliet.

Juliet handed over her notes to her father, who found out their writers, and made them take boxes and bespeak plays. So that all Juliet's lovers got was the privilege of paying more than other people, for the girl was as good as she was pretty—a rarer combination of qualities on the stage fifty years ago than now. She was tall and, in those days, slender. Later on she took after her mother; but who would have thought that so graceful a girl would ever arrive at fourteen stone? Her eyes and hair were black—eyes that never lost their lustre; and hair which, though it turned grey in later years, was then like a silken net, when it was let down, to catch the hearts of lovers. Of course she knew that she was pretty; what pretty woman does not? and of course, too, she did not know and would not understand the power of her own beauty; what pretty woman does? And because it was the very worst thing she could do for herself, she fell in love with me.

Her father knew it and meant to stop it from the beginning: but he was not a man to do things in a hurry, and so we went on in a fool's paradise, enjoying the stolen kisses, and talking of when we should be married. One night—I was Romeo—I was so carried away with passion that I acted for once naturally and unconventionally. There was a

full house; the performance was so out of the common that it took away the breath of the people, and they even forgot to applaud.

Unluckily old Kerrans was in the front, looking on. Of course he saw that it was not play-acting at all, but reality, between us, and made up his mind what to do at once.

The next day was Saturday. When I went into the treasury I found the good old fellow with a red face, and a little hesitation of manner.

'Look here,' he said, handing me the money, 'you are a good young fellow, Lucraft, and a likely actor. There's merit in you. But I can't have you spoiling my Juliet for the stage. So I'm going to put her up without you. After a bit I daresay I shall find another Romeo. You get away to London and find another engagement—there's a week's pay in advance—and when Juliet is married, or when you get rich, or when anything happens to make things different, why, you see, we shall all be glad to see you back. You needn't say goodbye to Juliet, because I've had it out with her this morning. A tough job it was too. Good-bye, my boy, and good luck to you.'

Good luck! Had he known the kind of luck that was coming to me!

I took my dismissal though with a heavy heart, and that afternoon climbed outside the night-coach to London.

I spent the first fortnight trying to get an engagement.

There were only two or three theatres then in London, and in them there was not even room for a super.

I tried the Greenwich and the Richmond theatres, but in vain. Then I tried the country managers, but either no answer came or a refusal. All this time the little money that I had was melting away. I held my lodgings from week to week, paid in advance. And one morning, after paying the rent, I found myself without a penny.

I had one or two things which I could pawn—a watch, a waistcoat, a few odds and ends in the way of wardrobe, and a few books—on the proceeds of them I lived for a whole week; and then, one morning, after spending twopence in the purchase of a penny loaf and a saveloy for breakfast, I was penniless, and also without the means of procuring another penny at all, because I had nothing left to pawn.

Many a young fellow has found himself in a similar predicament, but I doubt whether any one ever became so desperately hungry as I did on that day. I recollect that, having rashly eaten up my sausage at eight, I felt a sinking towards twelve; it was aggravated by the savoury smell of roast meat which steamed from the cookshops and dining-rooms as I walked along the streets. Towards one o'clock I gazed with malignant envy on the happy clerks who could go in and order platefuls of the roast and boiled which smoked in the windows, and threw a perfume more delicious than the sweetest strains of music into the streets where I lingered and looked. About two I observed the diners come out again, walking more slowly, but with an upright and satisfied air, while I—the sinking had been succeeded by a dull gnawing pain—was slowly doubling up. At half-past two I felt as if I could bear it no longer. I had been walking about,

trying different offices for a clerkship. I might as well have asked for a partnership. But I could walk no more. I leaned against a post—it was in Bucklersbury—opposite a dining-room, where hares, fowls, and turkeys were piled in the window among a boundless prodigality and wealth of carrots, turnips, and cauliflowers, till my senses swam at the contemplation. I longed for a caldron in which to put the whole contents of the shop front, and eat them at one Gargantuan repast. My appetite, already alluded to, was hereditary; one of the few things I can remember of my mother was a constant complaint that my father used to eat her out of house and home. To be sure, from other scraps of information handed down by tradition, I have reason to believe that the word eating was used by a figure of speech—the part for the whole—and included drinking. I was good at both, and as a trencherman I had been unsurpassed, as I said above, in the company, the dear old company among whom I had so often eaten beefsteak and fried onions with Juliet. The door of the restaurant opened now and then to let a hungry man enter or a full man go out, and I caught voices from within, stifled voices, as those sent up a pipe, calling for roast beef with plenty of brown—good heavens! plenty of brown; roast mutton, underdone—I love my mutton underdone; boiled beef with suet pudding and fat—I always took a great deal of pudding and fat with my boiled beef; roast veal and bacon with stuffing—a dish for the gods; calves' head for two—I could have eaten calves' head for a dozen; with orders pointing to things beyond my hungry imagination—hunger limits the boundaries

of fancy—puddings, fish, soup, cheese, and such delicacies. Alas! I wanted the solids. I felt myself growing feebler; I became more and more doubled up; I had thoughts of entering this paradise of the hungry, and, after eating till I could eat no longer, calmly laying down my knife and fork and informing the waiter that I had no money. There was a farce in which I had once played where the comic actor sent for the landlord, after a hearty meal, and asked him what he would do in case a stranger, after ordering and eating his dinner, should declare his inability to pay. 'Do, sir?' cried the host; 'I should kick him across the street.' 'Landlord,' said the low comedian, and it always told—'Landlord,' he used to rise up slowly as he spoke, and solemnly draw aside his coat-tails, turning his face in the direction of the street-door—'landlord, I'll trouble you.' I used to play the landlord.

It struck half-past three; the dead gnawing of hunger was followed by a sharp pain, irritating and much more unpleasant. The crowd of those who entered had been followed by the crowd of those who came out, and the heaven of hungry men was nearly empty again. I gazed still upon the turkeys and the hares, but with a lack-lustre eye, for I was nearly fainting.

Presently there came down the street an elderly gentleman, bearing before him, like a Lord Mayor in a French tale, his enormous abdomen: he had white hair, white eyebrows, white whiskers, and a purple face. He walked very slowly, as if the exertion might prove apoplectic, and leaned upon a thick stick. As he passed the shop he looked in at the window and wagged his head. At that moment I

groaned involuntarily. He turned round and surveyed me. I suppose I presented a strange appearance, leaning against the post, with stooping figure and tightly-buttoned coat. He had big projecting eyes flushed with red veins that gave him a wolfish expression.

'Young man,' he said, not benignantly at all, but severely, 'you look ill. Have you been drinking?'

I shook my head.

'I am only hungry,' I said; telling the truth because I was too far gone to hide it. 'I am only hungry; that is all that's the matter with me.'

He planted his stick on the ground, supporting both his hands upon the gold head, and wagged his head again from side to side with a grunting sound in his throat like the sawing of bones.

Grunt! 'Here's a pretty fellow for you!' Grunt! 'Hungry, and he looks miserable.' Grunt! 'Hungry, and he groans.' Grunt! 'Hungry—the most enviable position a man can be in—and he dares to repine at his lot.' Grunt! 'What are the lower classes coming to next, I wonder? Aren't you ashamed of yourself? Aren't you a model of everything that is ungrateful and'—grunt!—'and flying in the face of Providence? He lives in a land of victuals. London is a gigantic caravan, full of the most splendid things which it only wants an appetite to eat; and he's got that, and he laments!'

'What is the use if you have no money?'

Grunt! 'Is it a small appetite, as a rule, or is it a large appetite?'

'Large,' I replied. 'It is an awkward thing for a poor beggar like me to have such a devil of a twist. I was born with it. Very awkward just now.'

'Come with me, young man,' he grunted. 'Go before me. Don't talk, because that may interfere with the further growth of your appetite. Walk slowly and keep your mouth shut.'

He came behind me, walking with his chuckle and grunt.

'So. What a fine young fellow it is!' Grunt! 'What room for the development of the Alderman's Arch! What a backbone for the support of a stomach! What shoulders for a dinner-table, and what legs to put under it! Heavens! what a diner might be made of this boy if he only had money.' Grunt! 'Youth and appetite—health and hunger—and all thrown away upon a pauper! What a thing, what a thing! This way, young man.'

Turning down a court leading out of Bucklersbury, he guided me to a door, a little black portal, at which he stopped; then stooping to a keyhole of smaller size than was generally used in those days, he seemed to me to blow into it with his mouth; this was absurd, of course, but it seemed so to me. The door opened. He led the way into a passage, which, when the door shut behind us, as it did of its own accord, was pitch dark. We went up some stairs, and on the first landing the old gentleman, who was wheezing and puffing tremendously, opened another door, and led me into a room. It was a large room, resplendent with the light of at least forty wax candles. The centre was occupied by a large dining-table laid for a single person. Outside it was broad daylight, for it was not yet four o'clock.

'Sit down, young man, sit down,' puffed my host. 'Oh dear! oh dear! Sit down, do. I wish I was as hungry as you.'

I sat down in the nearest chair, and looked round the room. The first thing I remarked was that I could not see the door by which we had been admitted. The room was octagonal, and on every side stood some heavy piece of furniture; a table with glass, a case of bookshelves, a sofa, but no door. My head began to go round as I continued my observations. There was no window either, nor was there any fireplace. Then I felt a sudden giddiness, and I suppose I fell backwards on my chair. It was partly the faintness of hunger, but partly it was the strange room, and that old man glaring at me with his great wolfish eyes.

When I recovered I was lying on a sofa, and soft cold fingers were bathing my head, and pressing a perfumed handkerchief to my lips. I opened my eyes suddenly and sat up completely recovered. At the foot of the sofa stood my entertainer.

'Easy with him, Boule-de-neige; make him rest for a moment. Perhaps we have been too much for him.'

I turned to see who Boule-de-neige was. He was a negro of the blackest type, as ancient and withered as some old ourang of the tropical woods; his cheeks hung in folds, and his skin seemed too much for his attenuated body; his wool was white, and his gums were toothless; and his nose so flattened with age as to be almost invisible, looking at him as I was looking, in profile. His hands were as soft as any woman's, but icy cold; and his eyes were red and fiery.

'Boule-de-neige, what do you think of him?'

'Him berry fine young man, massa: him beautiful young man; got lubly abbatite develoffed, I tink; him last long time, much longer time dan last oder young man. Cluck! Him poor trash, dat young

man; dam poor trash; use up and go to de debbil in a month. Cluck! Dis young man got lubly stumjack, strong as bull. Cluck-cluck! How much you tink him eat to-night?’

‘We shall see, Boule-de-neige. We will try him with dinner first, and then pronounce on his performances. Young men do not always come up to their professions. But he looks well, and perhaps, Boule-de-neige—perhaps—Ah!’ He nodded with a deep sigh.

‘What time massa dine himself?’

‘I don’t know,’ the old gentleman answered, with another heavy sigh. ‘Perhaps not till nine o’clock; perhaps not, then. Vanish, Boule-de-neige, and serve.’

There was evidently something in my host’s mind by the way he sighed. Did Boule-de-neige go through the floor? Did the table sink when he disappeared, and come up loaded with dishes? It seemed so.

I sprang from the couch. The sight and smell of the food brought back my raging hunger.

‘Let me eat! I cried.

‘You shall. One moment first—only a single moment. Young man, tell me again and explicitly the nature and extent of your appetite. Be truthful, O be truthful! Our little tongues should never lie for mutton-chop or apple-pie. You know the hymn.

‘I’ve got a devil of an appetite. What is there to lie about?’

‘My dear young friend, there are many kinds of appetites. Yours may be fierce at first and promise great things, and then end in a miserably small

performance. I have known such. Is it a lasting appetite, now? Is it steady through a long dinner? Is it regular in its recurrence?"

'You shall see something of my performance,' I laughed, insensate wretch. 'You shall see. I never had a long dinner in my life. It is steady through a good many poundsofsteak, and as regular as a clock.'

'That is always something. Steak is as healthy a test as I know. Is it, secondly, an appetite that recovers itself quickly? That is very important. Is it a day-by-day or an hour-by-hour appetite? Is it good at all times of the day?'

'Alas, I wish it were not!'

'Hush, young man; do not blaspheme! Tell me, if you eat your fill now—it is half-past four—when do you think you might be ready again?' His eyes glistened like a couple of great rubies in the candle-light, and his hands trembled.

'I should say about eight. But I might do something light at seven, I daresay. Just now I feel as if I could eat a mountain.'

'He feels as if he could eat a mountain! Wonderful are the gifts of Providence! My dear young friend, I am very thankful—deeply, deeply thankful—that I met you. Sit down, and let me take the covers off for you; I long to see you eat. This is a blessed day, a truly blessed day! I will wait upon you myself. No one else. Boule-de-neige, vanish!'

I was too hungry to wonder what he meant, and sat down. He began to help me, talking as he went on: 'Plover's eggs—he has eaten the whole six! Turtle soup—gently, my young friend, gently. Ah, impetuous youth! More? Stay—green fat. Humour, humour your appetite; don't drive it;

calipash and calipee. It's really sinful to eat so fast. He takes all down without tasting it. No—no more. He put the soup aside, and took the cover off another dish. 'Salmon—with cucumber. Lobster-sauce—bless me, it's like a dream of fairyland! Fillet of sole—a beautiful dream to see him; he's a Julius Cæsar the Conqueror. Croquet de volaille—gone like a cloud from the sky. Don't wolf the food, my friend; taste it. Ris de veau—smiles of the dear little innocent, confiding calf—a little more bread with it? Mauviettes en caisse, larks in baskets—sweet, rapturous, singing larks, toothsome cockyolly larks. He eats them up, bones and all. Pause, my dear sir, and drink something. Here are champagne, hock, and sauterne; never touch sherry, it's a made-up wine, even the best of it. Come, a little champagne.'

'I generally take draught-beer, sir,' I replied modestly; 'but, if you please, a little fizz will be acceptable.'

I drank three glasses in rapid succession, and found them good. He meanwhile nodded and winked with an ever-increasing delight which I failed to understand.

'Now, my Nero, my Paris of Troy, my Judas Maccabæus—he mixed up his names, but it mattered nothing—'here is saddle of mutton, with potatoes, cauliflower, currant-jelly. More champagne? It's worth *sums* of money to see him. Curry? More champagne? Curry of chicken? Cabob curry of chicken, young Alexander the Great? Plenty of rice? Ho, ho, ho! Plenty of rice, he said; why, he is a Goliath—a Goliath of Gath, this young man!'

He really grew so purple that I thought he would have a fit of some kind. But the flattery pleased me all the same.

'Quail or bécassine—snipe, that is? He takes both, like Pompey. More champagne? Jelly, my Helio-gabalus, my modern Caracalla, apricot-jelly? Cabinet pudding? He has two helpings of the pudding. King Solomon in all his glory never—More champagne? A little hock to finish with? He takes his hock in a tumbler, this young Samson. Cheese—Brie—and celery. A glass of port with the cheese. He takes that in a tumbler too, like Og, King of Bashan.'

I was really overwhelmed with the splendour of the dinner, the classical and biblical flattery, and the extraordinary gratification which my really enormous hunger caused this remarkable old gentleman. He clapped his hands; he nodded his head; he slapped his legs; he winked and grinned; he smacked his lips; he evinced every sign of the most unbounded delight. When I had quite finished eating, he gave me a bottle of claret, and watched me while I rapidly disposed of it. Then he produced from a sideboard, where I certainly had not seen it a moment before, a small cup of strong black coffee with a tiny glass of liqueur. As for my own part, I hope I have made it clear that I dined extremely well; in fact, I had never even dreamed of such a dinner in my life. It was not only that I was half-starved, but that the things were so good.

'How do you feel now?' my host asked, a shade of anxiety crossing his brow.

II

There was still the strange look in my host's eyes—a sort of passionate and eager longing.

'I am very well, thank you, sir, and more grateful than I can tell you.'

'Hang the gratitude! Tell me if you feel any sense of repletion? Does the blood seem mounting to the head? Are you quite free from giddiness? No thickness in the speech? It's wonderful, it's providential, my finding you. Such a windfall; and just when I most wanted it. Our blessings truly come when we least expect them.'

This was strange language, but the whole proceedings were so strange that I hardly noticed it. Besides, I was extremely comfortable after my dinner, and disposed to rest.

'Now,' he went on, 'while you are digesting—by the way, the digestion is, I trust, unimpaired by drink or excess? Quite so; and what I expected in so good and so gifted a young man. Like an ostrich, as you say. Ho, ho! ha, ha! like an ostrich! It is, indeed, too much. Tell me, now, something, gently and dispassionately, so as not to injure your digestion, about your history.'

I told him all. While I related my simple story he interrupted now and then with some fresh question on the growth, the endurance, the regularity of my appetite, to which I gave satisfactory answers. It seemed to me that he took no kind of interest in what I told him, and was chiefly anxious about my appetite. When I had quite finished he went to the table—I noticed then that all traces of the dinner had disappeared—and laid out a docu-

ment, by which he placed a pen. Then he drew a chair, sat down in front of me, and assumed a serious air.

'Come,' he said, 'to business.'

I had not the smallest notion what the business was, but I bowed and waited. Perhaps he was going to offer me a clerkship. Visions of a large salary, to suit my expansive appetite, came across my brain.

'In your case,' he began, 'the possession of so great an appetite must be attended with serious inconveniences. You have no money; in a few hours you will be hungry again; you will endure great pain and suffering, greater than is felt by men less largely endowed with the greatest blessing—I mean with appetite.'

'Yes,' I said, 'it is a great trouble to me, this twist of mine, especially when I am hard up.'

He almost jumped out of his chair.

'Why, there,' he cried, 'what is the use of words? We are agreed already. Nothing could be more fortunate. Let us have no more beating about the bush. Young man, I will rid you of this nuisance; I will buy your appetite of you.'

I only stared. Was the old gentleman mad?

'It is a strange offer, I know,' he went on, 'a strange offer, and you have probably never heard a more remarkable one. But it is genuine. I will buy your appetite of you.'

'Buy my—buy my appetite?'

'Nothing easier. Read this.'

He gave me the paper which he had laid on the table, prepared in readiness, I suppose, for me. It was as follows:

'I, Luke Lucraft, being in sound mind and in good health, and of the mature age of twenty-four, do voluntarily and of my own free will and accord agree and promise to resign my appetite entirely and altogether for the use of Ebenezer Grumbelow from the day and hour of execution of this deed. In return whereof I agree to accept a monthly allowance of £30, also to date from the moment of signature, with a sum of £50, to be placed in my hands. I promise also that I will carefully study to preserve my regular habits and exercise the gift of a generous appetite; that I will not work immoderately, sit up late, practise vicious courses, or do anything that may tend to impair the regular recurrence of a healthy and vigorous hunger.'

Then followed a place for the signature and one for the witnesses.

'You see,' he went on, 'I ask for no unpleasant condition. I give you a free life, coupled with the simple condition of ordinary care. Do you agree?'

'I hardly know; it is so sudden.'

'Come, come'—he spoke with a harshness quite new—'come, let us have no nonsense. Do you agree?'

I read it over again.

'Give me a little time,' I said. 'Let me reflect till to-morrow morning.'

'Reflect!' his face flushed purple, and his blood-shot eyes literally glared: 'Reflect! what the devil does the boy want to reflect about? Has he got a penny, a friend, or a chance in the whole world? I will give you five minutes—come.' He rose up and stood before me. As I looked in his face a curious dimness came over my eyes; he seemed to recede

before me; he disappeared altogether. When I heard him speak again his voice sounded far, far off, but thin and clear, as if it came through some long tube. 'Luke Lucraft,' it said, 'see yourself.'

Yes; I saw myself, and though *outside* of what I saw, I felt the same emotions as if I had been the actual performer in the scenes I witnessed.

I was starving, and with feelings of bitter shame I begged for money of the passers-by. A woman gave me a shilling, and I hurried away to buy something to eat.

I was sleeping among the stalks, straw, and vegetable refuse of Covent-Garden Market. I awoke hungry and miserable. I begged again, and got nothing. Then—then—then I stole. I was not detected, and I stole again. The second time I was not detected. There came the third time when I was seen and apprehended. The misery and shame of the hour when I stood before the magistrate, in that horrible vision of a possible future, I cannot even yet forget. With this a constant sense of unsatisfied and craving hunger; a feeling as if hunger was the greatest evil in the whole world; a longing to get rid of it. Last scene of all, I was lying dead, starved to death with hunger and cold, in a miserable, bare, and naked garret.

By what black art did the old man delude my senses? It was a lie, and he knew it. I should have got some honest work, if only to wheel bricks or carry loads.

'There is your future, young man'—there came up from the distance the voice of the tempter—'a gloomy prospect: a miserable life, a wretched ending. Now look at the other side.'

The scene changed. I saw myself, in another guise. My hunger had vanished; I felt it no more.

I was well dressed, cheerful, and light-hearted. I was dancing in a room full of pretty girls; I was singing and playing; I was wandering among the woods and flowers; I was reading on a sofa; I was lying in the sunshine; I was looking at pictures; I was at the theatre; I was riding in the Park; I was following the hounds; I was making love to Juliet.

The pictures changed as fast as my fancy wandered from one thing to another. In all I was the same—free from the downward and earthly pressure of want and hunger, relieved from anxiety, with plenty of money, and full of all sweet and innocent fancies.

Lies again. But by what power could this necromancer so cheat and gull my brain?

'Very different scenes these, my dear young friend,' he said in a winning voice, 'are they not? Now,' he went on, and his voice was quite close to me, 'you have had your five minutes.'

The cloud passed from my eyes. I was sitting again in the octagonal room, the old man before me, watch in hand, as if he was counting the seconds.

'Five minutes and a quarter,' he growled. 'Now choose.'

'I have chosen,' I replied. 'I accept your offer.'

The influence of the things I had seen was too strong upon me. I could neither reason nor reflect.

'I accept your offer.'

'Why, that's brave,' he said, with a gigantic sigh of relief. 'That's what I expected of you. Boule-de-neige—Boule-de-neige!'

He clapped his hands.

Instantly the horrible old negro appeared behind his master's chair, as if he had sprung up from the ground. I believe he had. He looked more like a devil than ever, grinning from ear to ear, and his two eyes glowing in the candlelight like two great coals. The light fell, too, upon the seams and wrinkles of his face, bringing them out like the hills and valleys in a raised map. Strange as it all was to me, this ancient servitor produced the strangest effect upon me of anything.

'Boule-de-neige is witness for us,' said the old gentleman. 'Boule-de-neige, this young gentleman, Mr. Luke Lucraft, is about to sign a little deed, to which, as a matter of form, we require your signature too as witness.'

'Cluck!' said the negro. 'Dis young gegleman berry lucky—him berry lucky. What time massa take him dinner?'

'When do you think you shall be fairly hungry again?' he asked me. 'Now, no boastings—no false pretence and pride—because it will be the worse for you. Answer truthfully. It is now six.'

'I should say that at nine I should be able to take some supper, and at ten I shall certainly be hungry again. You see I have taken such an immense dinner.'

'Good.' He turned to Boule-de-neige. 'You see the young man is modest and promises fairly. I shall have supper—a plentiful supper—at ten punctually. Mr. Lucraft will now sign.'

I advanced to the table and took up the pen, but there was no ink.

'Cluck!' said the infernal negro, with another grin—'cluck! Massa wait lilly bit.'

He took my left hand in his soft and cold paw. I felt a sharp prick at my wrist.

'You will dip the pen,' said the old gentleman, 'in the blood. It is a mere form.'

'Cluck!' said Boule-de-neige.

'A mere form, because we have no ink handy.'

'Cluck-cluck!'

I signed my name as desired, and, following the directions of the old gentleman, placed my finger on the red wafer at the margin, saying, 'I declare this my act and deed.'

• Then I gave the pen to Boule-de-neige. He signed after me, in a firm flowing hand, 'Boule-de-neige.' As I looked, the letters seemed somehow to shape themselves into 'Beelzebub.' I looked at him with a kind of terror. The creature grinned in my face as if he divined my thought, and gave utterance to one of his hideous 'clucks.'

Then I began to feel the same faintness which I had at first experienced. It mounted upwards from my feet slowly, so that I heard the old gentleman's voice, though I saw nothing. It grew gradually fainter.

'Supper at ten, Boule-de-neige,' he was saying; 'I feel getting hungry already. What shall I do with myself till ten o'clock? I am certainly getting hungry. I think I can have it served at half-past nine. O, blessed day! O, thankful blessed day! Boule-de-neige, it must be supper for three—for four—for five. I shall have champagne—the Perrier Jouet—the curaçao, punch afterwards. Curaçao punch—I haven't tasted it for three months and more. O, what a blessed—blessed—blessed——'

I heard no more because my senses failed me altogether, and his voice died away in my ears.

When I came to myself I was leaning against the post in Bucklersbury, where I had met the old man.

A whiff of cooked meat from the restaurant, which caught me as I opened my eyes, produced a singular feeling of disgust. 'Pah,' I muttered, 'roast mutton!' and moved from the spot. My hunger was gone, that was quite certain. I felt a quietness about those regions, wherever they may be, which belong to appetite; I was almost dreamy in the repose which followed a morning so stormy. I walked quietly away homewards in a kind of daze, trying to make out something of what had happened. The first thing I found I could not remember was the name of the old gentleman. When that came back to me and under what circumstances I will tell you as we get along. Bit by bit I recalled the whole events of the afternoon, one after the other. I saw the old man, with his purple face and bloodshot eyes and white hair; I saw the wrinkled and seamed old negro; I saw the octagonal room without doors or windows; the splendid dinner; the host watching my every gesture; I remembered everything except the name of the man to whom I had sold—my appetite.

It was so strange that I laughed when I thought of it. I must have been drunk: he gave me a good dinner and I took too much wine; but, then, how was it that I remembered clearly every, even the smallest, detail?

On the bed in the one room which constituted my lodging I found a letter. It was from a firm of lawyers, dated that evening at half-past six—half an hour after I signed the paper—stating that they were empowered by a client, whose name was not

mentioned, to give me the sum of £30 monthly, to begin from that day, and to be paid to me personally. How did they get their instructions then? And it was all true!

I was too tired with the day's adventures to think any more; and, though it was only nine o'clock, I went to bed and fell fast asleep. In an hour I awoke again, with a choking sensation, as if I was eating too much. I knew instantly what was going on, and by a kind of prophetic insight. The old man was taking his supper, and taking more than was good—for me. I sprang from the bed, gasping for breath. Presently, as I gathered, he began to drink too much as well. My brain went round and round. I laughed, sang, and danced; and soon after, with a heavy fall, I rolled senseless on the carpet, and remembered nothing more.

It was early in the morning when I awoke, still lying on the floor. I had a splitting headache. I had fallen against some corner of the furniture and blackened one eye. I had broken two chairs somehow or other. I was cold, ill, and shaken. I got into bed, and tried to remember what had happened. Clearly I must have made a drunken beast of myself over the dinner, and reeled home with my head full of fancies and dreams; perhaps the dinner itself was a dream and a hallucination too; if so, the pangs of hunger would soon recommence. But they did not. Then I fell asleep, and did not awake again till the sun was high and the clock striking ten. How ill and wretched I felt as I dressed! My hand shook, my eyes were red, my face swollen. Surely I must have been intoxicated. I had been, up to that day at least, a temperate man, partly,

no doubt, from the very wholesome reason which keeps so many of us sober—the necessity of poverty; but of course I had not arrived at four and twenty years and seen so much of the world without recognising the signs of too much drink. I had them, every one; and, as most men know too well, they are all summed up in the simple expression, ‘hot coppers.’ Alas! I was destined to become only too familiar with the accursed symptoms. Involuntarily, when I had dressed, I put my hands in my pockets; there was money, gold—sovereigns—my pocket was full of them. I counted them in a stupor. Forty-nine, and one rolled into the corner—fifty; it was part of the sum for which I had sold my appetite; and on the table lay the letter from Messrs. Crackett Charges, inviting me to draw thirty pounds a month.

Then it was all true!

I sat down, and, with my throbbing temples and feverish pulse, tried to make it out. Everything became plain except the name of the purchaser—Mr.—Mr.— I remembered Boule-de-neige, the house, the room, and the dinner, but not the name of that arch-deceiver, the whole of whose villainy I was far from realising yet; and until it was told me later on I never did remember the name.

It was strange. Men are said to have sold their souls to the devil for money, bartering away an eternity of happiness for a few years of pleasure; but as for me, I had exchanged, as it seemed at first sight, nothing but the inconvenience of a healthy appetite with nothing to eat for the means of living comfortably without it. There could be no sin in such a transaction; it was on a different level

altogether from the bargain made by Faust. And there were the broad, the benevolent facts, so to speak—my pocket full of sovereigns; and the letter instructing me to call at an office for thirty pounds monthly.

Benevolent facts I thought them. You shall see. No sin could be laid to my door for the transaction. You shall judge. No harm could follow so simple a piece of business. You shall read. On my way out I met the landlady, who gave me notice to quit at the end of the week.

‘I thought you were a quiet and a sober young man,’ she said. ‘Ah, never will I trust to good looks again. Me and the lodgers kept awake till two in the morning with your singing and dancing, let alone banging the floor with the chairs. Not an hour after your week’s up, if you was to pray on your knees, shall you stay. And next door threatening the police; and me a quiet woman for twenty years.’

My heart sank again. But, after all, perhaps it was I myself, not the good old gentleman, my kind patron and benefactor, at all, who was the cause of this disturbance. It was undoubtedly true that I had drunk a great quantity of wine. I begged her pardon humbly, and passed out.

It was now eleven o’clock, but I felt no desire for breakfast. That was an experience quite novel to me. Still, I went to a coffee-house, according to habit, and ordered some tea and a rasher. When they came I discovered, with a horrid foreboding of worse misfortune, that my taste was gone. Except that one thing was solid and the other liquid, I distinguished nothing. Nor did my sense of smell assist me; as I found later, my nose was affected

agreeably or disagreeably, but I had no other use for it. Gunpowder, sulphuretted hydrogen gas, and tobacco offended my nose. So did certain smells belonging to cookery. On the other hand, certain flowers, tea, and claret pleased me, but I was unable to distinguish between them. Not only could I not taste things, but I had no gratification in eating them. I ate and drank mechanically, because I knew that the body must be kept going on something.

All this knowledge, however, and more, came by degrees. After making a forced breakfast I bent my steps to the lawyers', who had an office in Lincoln's Inn Fields.

The letter was received by a conceited young clerk in shiny black habiliments, and a self-satisfied manner.

'Ha,' he said, 'I thought you would soon come round to us after the letter. Sign that. You haven't been long. None of them are.'

It was a receipt, and I was on the point of asking if it was to be signed in blood, when he settled the question by giving me the ink.

'There, Luke Lucraft, across the eightpenny stamp. I'm not allowed to answer any questions you may put, Mr. Lucraft, nor to ask you any; so take your money, and good morning to you. I suppose, like the rest of them, you don't know the name of your benefactor, and would like to—yes; but you needn't ask *me*; and I've orders not to admit you to see either Mr. Charges or Mr. Crackett. They'd trouble enough with the last but one. He broke into their office once, drunk, and laid about him with the ruler.

I burst into a cold dew of terror.

'However, Mr. Lucraft, I hope you will be more fortunate than your predecessors.'

'Where are they? Who are they?'

'I do not know where they are, not for a certainty,' he replied with a grin. 'But we may guess. Dead and buried they are, all of them. Gone to kingdom come; all died of the same thing, too. Delicious Trimmings killed them. Poor old gentleman! He's too good for this world, as everybody knows, and the more he's taken in the more he's deceived. Anyhow, he's very unlucky in his pensioners. He did say when the last went off that he would have no more; he wept over it, and declared that his bounty was always abused; but there never was such a benevolent old chap. I only wish he'd take a fancy to me.'

'What did you say is his name, by the way?'

The clerk looked at me with a cunning wink.

'If you don't know, I am sure I do not,' he said.

'Here is the cheque, Mr. Lucraft, and I hope you will continue to come here and draw it a good deal longer than the other chaps. But there's a blight on the pensioners. Lord, what a healthy chap Tom Kirby—he was a Monmouth man—looked when he first came for his cheques! As strong as a bull and as fresh as a lark.'

'A good appetite had he?'

'No; couldn't eat anything after a bit; said he fancied nothing. He pined away and died in a galloping consumption before the third month was due. Nobody ever saw him drinking, but he was drunk every night like the rest. Perhaps it's only coincidence. Better luck to *you*, Mr. Lucraft.'

This conversation did not reassure me, and I

determined to go over to Bucklersbury at once and see my patron. I found the post against which I was leaning when he accosted me; there was no doubt about that, for the hares and cauliflowers were still in the shop-windows, only they looked disgusting to me this morning. I found the street into which he had led me, and then—then—it was the most extraordinary thing, I could not find the door by which we entered. Not only was there no door, but there seemed no place where such a door as I remembered could exist in this little winding narrow street. I went up and down twice. I looked at all the windows. I asked a policeman if he had ever seen an old gentleman about the street such as I described, or such a negro as Boule-de-neige; but he could give me no information. Only as I prowled slowly along the pavement I heard distinctly—it gave me a nervous shock that I could not account for—the infernal ‘Cluck-cluck!’ of the negro with the cold soft hands, the wrinkled skin, and the fiery red eyes. He was chuckling at me from some hiding-place of his own, where he was safe. He had done me no harm that I knew of, but I hated him at that moment.

I was by this time not at all elated at my good fortune. I even craved to have back again what I had sold. I felt heavy at heart, and had a presentiment of fresh trouble before me. I thought of the fate of those unknown and unfortunate predecessors, all dead in consequence of drink, evil courses, and D.T. Heavens! was I too to die miserably with delirium tremens, after I had sold my taste, and could only tell brandy from water, like the cask which might hold either, by the smell?

At half-past one, the luncheon time for all who have appetites, the sense of being gorged came upon me again, but this time without the giddiness. I went to a cigar divan in the Strand, and fell sound asleep. When I awoke at six the oppression had passed away. And now I began to realise something of the consequences of my act; I say something, because worse, far worse, remained behind. I was doomed, I saw clearly, to be the victim of the old man's gluttony. He would eat, and I should suffer. Already, as I guessed from the clerk's statements, he had killed three strong men before me. I was to be the fourth. I went again to Bucklersbury, and sought in every house for something that might give me a clue. I loitered in the quiet City streets in the hope of finding my tormentor, and forcing him to give me back my bond. There was no clue, and I did not meet him. But I felt him. He began dinner, as nearly as I could feel, about seven o'clock; he took his meal with deliberation, judging from the gradual nature of my sensations; but he took an amazing quantity, and by eight o'clock the weight upon me was so great that I could scarcely breathe. How I cursed my folly! How I impotently writhed under the burden I had wantonly laid upon myself! And then he began to drink. The fiend, the scoundrel! I felt the fumes mount to my head; there was no exhilaration, no forgetfulness of misery; none of the pleasant gradations of excitement, hope, and confidence, through which men are accustomed to pass before arriving at the final stage, the complete oblivion, of intoxication. I felt myself getting gradually but hopelessly drunk. I struggled against the feeling,

but in vain; the houses went round and round with me; my speech, when I tried to speak, became thick; the flags of the pavement flew up and struck me violently on the forehead, and I became unconscious of what happened afterwards.

III

In the morning I found myself lying on a stone bench in a small whitewashed room. My brows were throbbing and my throat was parched, and in my brain was ringing, I do not know why, the infernal 'Cluck-cluck!' of the negro with derisive iteration. I had not long to meditate; the door opened, and a constable appeared. 'Now then,' he said roughly, 'if you can stand upright by this time, come along.'

It was clear enough to me now what had happened: I was in custody, in a police-cell, and I was going before the magistrate.

I dream of that ignominy still, though forty years have passed since I was placed in the dock and asked what I had to say for myself. 'Drunk and disorderly.' There was nothing to say, I gave a false name, paid my fine, and was allowed to go away. Then I went to my lodgings, and tried to face the position.

It was clear that the demon to whom I had sold myself was incapable of the slightest consideration towards me. He would eat and drink as much as he felt disposed to do, careless of any consequences that might befall me. It was equally evident that he intended to make the most of his bargain, to eat enormously every day, and to drink himself drunk every night. And I was powerless. Meantime it

was becoming evident that the consequences to me would be as serious as if I were myself guilty of these excesses. One drop of comfort alone remained: my appetite would fail, and my tormentor would be punished where he would feel it most. I lay down and waited till luncheon time; no sense of repletion came over me; it was clear, therefore, that he was already suffering a vicarious punishment, so to speak, for yesterday's debauch. In the afternoon I crept out, fearful at every step of meeting some one who had seen my shame in the morning, and took in my regular allowance of food—it was horrible to think that the night's excesses made no difference whatever in my capacity for food, which now remained at a steady quantity. In fact I was a human engine which at stated times required water and fuel. In the evening I returned early, in order to avoid a repetition of last night's disgrace, and locked myself in.

At seven dinner began again; at eight I was gorged and choking; at nine I was drunk. I thought the best course would be for me to hide myself away altogether. I took a little roadside cottage north of Islington, put in some furniture, and retired there to live entirely by myself. In the calmness of despair I doomed my life to solitude. Within the walls of one place at least I was secure. And here, night after night, I waited with trembling the attacks of gluttony, surfeit and drunkenness; for my master had no pity.

As for my meals, I bought them ready prepared. They consisted almost wholly of bread and cold mutton. You may judge of the absolutely tasteless condition to which I was reduced, when I write

calmly and truthfully that cold boiled mutton was as agreeable to me as any other form of food. I found, after repeated trials, that mutton forms the best fuel—it is better than either beef or pork—and keeps the human engine at work for the longest time. So I had mutton. As I discovered also that bulk was necessary, and that only a certain amount of animal food was wanted, I used to have cold potatoes always ready. I stoked twice a day, at eleven in the morning and about five in the afternoon. Thus fortified, I got through the miserable hours as best I could.

I look back now on that period as one of unmitigated misery and despair. I was daily growing more bloated, fatter, and flabbier in the cheeks. My hands trembled in the morning. I seemed losing the power of connected thought. My very lips were thickening.

I hope I can make it clear what was the effect of my bargain on myself—I mean without reference to the sufferings inflicted on me by my tyrant. People, however, never can know, unless they happen to be like myself, which is unlikely, how great a part eating and drinking take in the conduct of life. Between the rest of the world and me there was a great gulf fixed. They could enjoy, I could not; they could celebrate every joyful event with something additional to eat; they could make a little festival of every day; they could give to happiness an outward and tangible form. Alas, not only was I debarred from this, but I was cut off even from joy itself; for, if you look at it steadily, you will find that most of human joy or suffering is connected with the senses. I had bartered away a

good half of mine, and the rest seemed in mourning for the loss of their fellows. As for my pale and colourless life, it was as monotonous as the clock. If I neglected to stoke, the usual feebleness would follow. There was no gracious looking forward to a pleasant dinner; no trembling anticipations in hope and fear of what might be preparing; no cheerful contemplation of the joint while the carver sharpens his knife; no discussions of flavour and richness; no modestly-hazarded conclusions as to more currants; no rolling of the wine-glass in the fingers to the light, and smacking of lips over the first sip—all these things were lost to me. Reader, if haply this memoir ever sees a posthumous light, think what would happen to yourself if eating and drinking, those perennial joys of humanity, which last from the infantine pap to the senile Revalenta Arabica, were taken away.

All things tasted alike, as I have said, and cold mutton formed my staple dish. As I could only distinguish between beer, wine, coffee, and tea by the look, I drank water. If I ventured, which was seldom, to take my dinner in a restaurant I would choose my *pièce de résistance* by the look, by some fancied grace in the shape, but not by taste or smell. The brown of roast beef might attract me one day and repel me the next. I was pleased with the comeliness of a game-pie, or tickled by some inexplicable external charm of a beef-steak-pudding. But three quarters of my life were gone, and with them all my happiness.

If you have no appetite for eating, you can enjoy nothing in the whole world. That is an axiom. I could not taste, therefore my eye ceased to feel

delight in pleasant sights, and my ear in pleasant sounds. It was not with me as in the case of a blind man, that an abnormal development of some other sense ensued; quite the contrary. In selling one, I seem to have sold them all. For, as I discovered, man is one and inseparable; you cannot split him up; and when my arch-deceiver bought my appetite, he bought me out and out. A wine-merchant might as well pretend to sell the bouquet of claret and preserve the body; or a painter the colour of his picture and preserve the drawing; or a sculptor the grace of his group and keep the marble. The thing was simple, and all was lost.

This time lasted for about four months. On the first of each month I went to receive my pay—the wages of sin—from the clerk, who surveyed me critically, but said nothing till the morning of the fourth month. Then, while he handed me my money, he whispered confidentially across the table:

‘Look here, old fellow, you know; you’re going it, worse than poor Tom Kirby. Why don’t you stop it? What is the good of a feller’s drinking himself to death? The old gentleman was here yesterday, asking me how you looked, and if you continued steady. Pull up, old man, and knock it off.’

I took the money in my trembling hands and slunk away abashed. When I got home again, I am not ashamed to say that I cried like a child.

Delirium tremens! That would begin soon, and then the end would not be far off. It was too awful. Think of my position. I was but four-and-twenty. Not only was I deprived of the pleasure—mind you,

a very real pleasure—of eating and drinking; I was the most temperate man in the world, though that was no great credit to myself, considering; and yet I bore in my face and my appearance, and felt in my very brain, all the marks and signs of confirmed drunkenness and the hopelessness of it. That hardened old voluptuary, that demon of gluttony, that secret murderer, would have no pity. He must have felt by the falling-off of the splendid appetite which he was doing his utmost to ruin, that things were getting worse, and he was resolved—I had suspected this for some time—to kill me off by drinking me to death.

I believe I should have been dead in another week, but for a blessed respite, due, I afterwards discovered, to my demon being laid up with so violent a sore throat that he could not even swallow. What was my joy at being able to go to bed sober, to wake without a headache, to feel my bad symptoms slowly disappearing, to recover my nerves! For a whole fortnight I was happy—so happy that I even believed the improvement would last and that the old man was penitent. One day, after fourteen days of veritable earthly paradise, I was walking along the Strand—for I was no longer afraid of venturing out—and met my old manager, Juliet's father. He greeted me with a warmth that was quite touching under all the circumstances.

'My dear boy, I have been longing to know your whereabouts. Come and tell me all about it. Have you dined? Let us have some dinner together.'

I excused myself, and asked after Juliet.

'Juliet is but so-so. Ah do you know, Lucraft,

sometimes I think that I did wrong to part you. And yet, you know, you had no money. Make some, my boy, and come back to us.'

This was hearty. I forgot my troubles and my state of bondage and everything, except Juliet.

'I—I—I have money,' I said. 'I have come into a little money unexpectedly.'

'Have you?' he replied, clasping me by the hand. 'Then come down and see Juliet. Or—stay; no. The day after to-morrow is Juliet's ben. We are playing at Richmond. We have one of your own parts—you shall be Sir Harry Wildair. I will alter the bills. You are sure to come?'

'Sure to come,' I said with animation. 'Capital! I know every line in the part. Tell Juliet that an old friend will act with her.'

We made a few new arrangements and parted. I bought a copy of the play at Lacy's, and studied the part over again.

Next day I drove to Richmond, and found my Juliet in an impatience that went to my heart. She had grown thin and pale; I, on the other hand, fat and red-faced, though a fortnight's respite had done wonders to restore me.

'I don't think you are looking so well as you used,' said the dear girl. 'Mr. Mould'—Mr. Mould was the dresser—'says that you look as if you had been drinking.'

I laughed, but felt a little uneasy.

We rang up at seven.

I began with all my former fire and vigour, because I was acting again with Juliet. The old life came back to me; I forgot my troubles; I was really happy, and I believe I acted well. At all

events, the house applauded. Between the first and second act a sudden terror seized me. I felt that the old man was eating again. That passed off, because he ate very little. But then he began to drink, and to drink fast.

It was no use fighting against it. I believe the villain must have been drinking raw brandy, because I was drunk in five minutes. I staggered and reeled about on the stage, I laughed wildly and sang foolishly, and then I tumbled down in a heap and could not get up again. The last thing I remember is the angry roar of poor old Kerrans, beside himself with passion, telling the carpenters to carry that drunken beast away and throw him into the road. I heard afterwards that they were obliged to drop the curtain, and that the *éclat* of poor Juliet's benefit was entirely spoiled. As for myself, the carpenters carried me out to the middle of Richmond Green, where they were going to leave me, only one of them had compassion, and wheeled me to his own house in a barrow.

I was quite crushed by this blow. For the first time I felt tempted to commit suicide and end it all. To be sure I ought to have foreseen this, and all the other dreadful things. Directly my master, my owner, got able to swallow, though he could not eat, he could drink, and ordered the most fiery liquor he could procure, with a view to kill me off and begin with another victim.

But Providence ruled otherwise.

One evening, a few days after my disgrace at the Richmond Theatre, I was sitting in my lonely cottage, expectant of the usual drunken bout, when I felt a curious agitation within me, an internal

struggle, as if through all my veins a tempestuous wave was surging and rushing. I lay down.

'This is some new devilry of the old man,' I said to myself. 'Let him do his worst; at least, I must try to bear it with resignation.' I began to speculate on my inevitable and approaching end, and to wonder curiously what proportion of the sin of all this drunkenness would be laid to my charge.

To my astonishment nothing more followed. The tumult of my system gradually subsided, and I fell asleep.

In the morning I awoke late, and missed the usual headache. I had, therefore, I was surprised to find, actually not been drunk the night before. I rose with my customary depression, and was astonished to discover that my nerves were steadier and spirits higher than I had known for a long time.

I mechanically went to the cupboard and pulled out my cold mutton and potatoes. Who can picture my joy when I found that I could taste the meat again, and that it was nasty? I hardly believed my senses; in fact, I had lost them for so long that it was difficult to understand that they had come back to me. I tried the potatoes. Heavens, what a horrible thing to a well-regulated palate is a cold boiled potato!

At first, as I said, I could not believe that I had recovered my taste; then, as the truth forced itself upon me, and I found that I could not only taste, but was actually hungry, I jumped and danced, and was beside myself with joy. Think of a convict suddenly released, and declared guiltless of the charges brought against him. Think of a prisoner

on the very ladder of the gallows-tree, with the rope round his neck, reprieved and pardoned. Think of one doomed to death by his physician receiving the assurance that it was all a mistake, and that he would gather up long years of life as in a sheaf. And think that such joy as these would feel, I felt—and more!

I went to the nearest coffee-shop and ordered bacon, eggs, and tea, offering up a short grace with every plate as it came. And then, because I felt sure that my old tormentor must be dead, I repaired to my lawyers', and saw the clerk.

'Ah,' he said, 'the poor old man's gone at last! Went out like the snuff of a candle. His illness was only twenty-four hours. Well, he's gone to heaven, if ever man did.'

'What did he die of—too much eating and drinking?'

'Mr. Lucraft,' said the clerk severely, 'this is not the tone for *you* to adopt towards that distinguished man, your benefactor. He died, sir—being a man of moral, temperate, and even abstemious life, though of full habit—of apoplexy.'

'Oh!' I said, careless what the clerk said, but glad to be quite sure that the diabolical old villain was really dead. I suppose never was such joy over repentance of any sinner as mine over the death of that murdering glutton, for whom no words of hatred were too strong.

'I think you've got to see our senior partner,' said the clerk. 'Step this way.'

He led me to a room where I found a grave and elderly gentleman sitting at a table.

'Mr. Lucraft?' he said. 'I was expecting you. I

saw your late patron's negro this morning. He told me that you would call.'

I stared, but said nothing.

'I have a communication to make to you, on the part of our departed friend, Mr. Ebenezer Grumbelow. It is dated a few weeks since, and is to the effect that a sum of money which I hold was to be placed in your hands in case of his death. This, it appears, he anticipated, for some reason or other.'

'Ebenezer Grumbelow.' That was the name which had so long escaped my memory—'Ebenezer Grumbelow.'

I said nothing, but stared with all my eyes.

'My poor friend,' the lawyer went on, 'after remarking that unless you change your unfortunate habits you will come to no good, gave me this money himself—here is the cheque—so that it will not appear in his last will and testament.'

I took it in silence.

'Well, sir—he looked at me in some surprise—'have you no observation to make, or remark to offer, on this generosity?'

'None,' I said.

'I do not know,' he continued; 'I do not know—your signature here, if you please—what reason Mr. Grumbelow had in taking you up, or what claim you possessed upon his consideration; but I think, sir, I do think, that some expression, some sense of regret, is due.'

I buttoned up the cheque in my pocket.

'Mr. Grumbelow was a philanthropist, I believe, sir?'

'He was. As a philanthropist, as a supporter of charities, as a public donor of great amounts, Mr.

Grumbelow's name stands in the front. So much we all know.'

'A religious man, too?'

'Surely, surely; one of our most deeply religious men. A man who was not ashamed of his saintly profession.'

'Cluck-cluck!'

It was the familiar face of Boule-de-neige at the door.

'You know, I suppose,' said the lawyer, 'Mr. Grumbelow's body-servant, a truly Christian negro?'

'Was there,' I asked, 'any clause in Mr. Grumbelow's letter—any conditions attached to this gift?'

'None whatever. It is a free gift. Stay, there is a postscript which I have ought to have read to you. You will perhaps understand it. In it Mr. Grumbelow says that as to the services rendered by him to you, and by you to him, it will be best for your own sake to keep them secret.'

I bowed.

'I may now tell you, Mr. Lucraft, without at all wishing to break any confidence that may have existed between you and the deceased, that a friend of Mr. Grumbelow's—no other, indeed, than the Rev. Jabez Jumbles, a name doubtless known to you—intends to write the biography of this distinguished and religious man, as an example to the young. Any help you can afford to so desirable an end will be gratefully received. Particularly, Mr. Lucraft, any communication on the subject of his continual help given to young men, who regularly disappointed him and died of drink.'

I bowed again and retired.

Did any one ever hear of such a wicked old man?

Outside the office I was joined by the negro.

'What have you got to say to me, detestable wretch?' I cried, shaking my fist in his withered old face.

'Cluck-cluck! Massa not angry with poor old Boule-de-neige. How young massa? Young massa pretty well? How de lubly abbadide of de young gegleman? How him strong stumjack? Cluck-cluck!'

He kept at a safe distance from me. I think I should have killed him if I had ever clutched him by the throat.

'Ole massa him always ask, "How dat young debble? Go and see, Boule-de-neige." I go to young massa's cottage daraway, and come back. "Him berry dam bad, sir," I say; "him going to de debble berry fast, just like dem oders. De folk all say he drink too much for his berry fine constitution." Cluck-cluck! Ole massa he only say ebbery night, "Bring de brandy, Boule-de-neige; let's finish him." Cluck-cluck!'

Here was a Christian negro for you!

'Tell me, what did your master die of?'

'Apple perplexity, massa.'

'Ah! what else? Come, Boule-de-neige, I know a good deal; tell me more.'

'Massa's time up,' he whispered, coming close to me. 'Time quite up, and him berry much 'fraid. Massa Lucraft want servant? Boule-de-neige berry good servant. Cook lubly dinner; make massa rich, like Massa Grumbelow.'

'I'd rather hire the devil!' I exclaimed.

'Cluck-cluck-cluck!' grinned the creature; and really he looked at the moment as much like the devil as one could wish. 'Cluck! dat massa can do if massa like.'

I rushed away, too much excited by the recovery of my freedom to regard what he said.

I was free! What next?

Mr. Kerrans next. I found him in that state of mind which becomes the heavy father outraged in his best and tenderest feelings. I had to give him a good deal of brandy-and-water; but I succeeded at length in winning him to my way of thinking, and he gave me an interview with Juliet.

The dear girl forgave me.

* * * * *

I have only to add that, a month after our union, I told my wife the whole story.

She asked if I took her for a fool.

Since then I have told it to a great many persons, not one of whom ever believed it, except one old lady perhaps; a dear old lady in many respects, only she believes in Joanna Southcott as well as in my story, and mixes up the prophetess with my old murderer. And to the day of her death Juliet never allowed me the key of the spirit-case. There was no telling, she said, when a man might break out again.

THE GREAT GOOD PLACE

By HENRY JAMES

I

GEORGE DANE had opened his eyes to a bright new day, the face of nature well washed by last night's downpour and shining as with high spirits, good resolutions, lively intentions—the great glare of recommencement in short fixed in his patch of sky. He had sat up late to finish work—arrears overwhelming, then at last had gone to bed with the pile but little reduced. He was now to return to it after the pause of the night; but he could only look at it, for the time, over the bristling hedge of letters planted by the early postman an hour before and already, on the customary table by the chimney-piece, formally rounded and squared by his systematic servant. It was something too merciless, the domestic perfection of Brown. There were newspapers on another table, ranged with the same rigour of custom, newspapers too many—what could any creature want of so much news?—and each with its hand on the neck of the other, so that the row of their bodiless heads was like a series of decapitations. Other journals, other periodicals of every sort, folded and in wrappers, made a huddled mound that had been growing for several days and of which he had been wearily, helplessly aware. There were new books, also in wrappers as well as disenveloped and dropped again—books from publishers, books from authors,

books from friends, books from enemies, books from his own bookseller, who took, it sometimes struck him, inconceivable things for granted. He touched nothing, approached nothing, only turned a heavy eye over the work, as it were, of the night—the fact, in his high wide-windowed room, where duty shed its hard light into every corner, of the still unashamed admonitions. It was the old rising tide, and it rose and rose even under a minute's watching. It had been up to his shoulders last night—it was up to his chin now.

Nothing had *gone*, had passed on while he slept—everything had stayed; nothing, that he could yet feel, had died—so naturally, one would have thought; many things on the contrary had been born. To let them alone, these things, the new things, let them utterly alone and see if that, by chance, wouldn't somehow prove the best way to deal with them: this fancy brushed his face for a moment as a possible solution, just giving it, as so often before, a cool wave of air. Then he knew again as well as ever that leaving was difficult, leaving impossible—that the only remedy, the true soft effacing sponge, would be to *be* left, to be forgotten. There was no footing on which a man who had ever liked life—liked it at any rate as *he* had—could now escape it. He must reap as he had sown. It was a thing of meshes; he had simply gone to sleep under the net and had simply waked up there. The net was too fine; the cords crossed each other at spots too near together, making at each a little tight hard knot that tired fingers were this morning too limp and too tender to touch. Our poor friend's touched nothing—only stole significantly into his pockets

as he wandered over to the window and faintly gasped at the energy of nature. What was most overwhelming was that she herself was so ready. She had soothed him rather, the night before, in the small hours by the lamp. From behind the drawn curtain of his study the rain had been audible and in a manner merciful; washing the window in a steady flood, it had seemed the right thing, the retarding interrupting thing, the thing that, if it would only last, might clear the ground by floating out to a boundless sea the innumerable objects among which his feet stumbled and strayed. He had positively laid down his pen as on a sense of friendly pressure from it. The kind full swish had been on the glass when he turned out his lamp; he had left his phrase unfinished and his papers lying quite as for the flood to bear them away in its rush. But there still on the table were the bare bones of the sentence—and not all of those; the single thing borne away and that he could never recover was the missing half that might have paired with it and begotten a figure.

Yet he could at last only turn back from the window; the world was everywhere, without and within, and the great staring egotism of its health and strength wasn't to be trusted for tact or delicacy. He faced about precisely to meet his servant and the absurd solemnity of two telegrams on a tray. Brown ought to have kicked them into the room—then he himself might have kicked them out.

'And you told me to remind you, sir——'

George Dane was at last angry. 'Remind me of nothing!'

'But you insisted, sir, that I was to insist!'

He turned away in despair, using a pathetic quaver at absurd variance with his words: 'If you insist, Brown, I'll kill you!' He found himself anew at the window, whence, looking down from his fourth floor, he could see the vast neighbourhood, under the trumpet-blare of the sky, beginning to rush about. There was a silence, but he knew Brown hadn't left him—knew exactly how straight and serious and stupid and faithful he stood there. After a minute he heard him again.

'It's only because, sir, you know, sir, you can't remember——'

At this Dane did flash round; it was more than at such a moment he could bear. 'Can't remember, Brown? I can't forget. That's what's the matter with me.'

Brown looked at him with the advantage of eighteen years of consistency. 'I'm afraid you're not well, sir.'

Brown's master thought. 'It's a shocking thing to say, but I wish to heaven I weren't! It would be perhaps an excuse.'

Brown's blankness spread like the desert. 'To put them off?'

'Ah!' The sound was a groan; the plural pronoun, *any* pronoun, so mistimed. 'Who is it?'

'Those ladies you spoke of—to luncheon.'

'Oh!' The poor man dropped into the nearest chair and stared a while at the carpet. It was very complicated.

'How many will there be, sir?' Brown asked.

'Fifty!'

'Fifty, sir?'

Our friend, from his chair, looked vaguely about; under his hand were the telegrams, still unopened, one of which he now tore asunder. 'Do hope you sweetly won't mind, to-day, 1.30, my bringing poor dear Lady Mullet, who's so awfully bent,' he read to his companion.

His companion weighed it. 'How many does *she* make, sir?'

'Poor dear Lady Mullet? I haven't the least idea.'

'Is she—a—deformed, sir?' Brown inquired, as if in this case she might make more.

His master wondered, then saw he figured some personal curvature. 'No; she's only bent on coming!' Dane opened the other telegram and again read out: 'So sorry it's at eleventh hour impossible, and count on you here, as very greatest favour, at two sharp instead.'

'How many does *that* make?' Brown imperturbably continued.

Dane crumpled up the two missives and walked with them to the waste-paper basket, into which he thoughtfully dropped them. 'I can't say. You must do it all yourself. I shan't be there.'

It was only on this that Brown showed an expression. 'You'll go instead——'

'I'll go instead!' Dane raved.

Brown, however, had had occasion to show before that *he* would never desert their post. 'Isn't that rather sacrificing the three?' Between respect and reproach he paused.

'Are there three?'

'I lay for four in all.'

His master had at any rate caught his thought.

'Sacrificing the three to the one, you mean? Oh I'm not going to *her*!'

Brown's famous 'thoroughness'—his great virtue—had never been so dreadful. 'Then where *are* you going?'

Dane sat down to his table and stared at his ragged phrase. '*There* is a happy land—far far away!' He chanted it like a sick child and knew that for a minute Brown never moved. During this minute he felt between his shoulders the gimlet of criticism.

'Are you quite sure you're all right?'

'It's my certainty that overwhelms me, Brown. Look about you and judge. Could anything be more "right," in the view of the envious world, than everything that surrounds us here: that immense array of letters, notes, circulars; that pile of printers' proofs, magazines and books; these perpetual telegrams, these impending guests, this retarded unfinished and interminable work? What could a man want more?'

'Do you mean there's too much, sir?'—Brown had sometimes these flashes.

'There's too much. There's too much. But *you* can't help it, Brown.'

'No, sir,' Brown assented. 'Can't *you*?'

'I'm thinking—I must see. There are hours——!' Yes, there were hours, and this was one of them: he jerked himself up for another turn in his labyrinth, but still not touching, not even again meeting, his admonisher's eye. If he was a genius for any one he was a genius for Brown; but it was terrible what that meant, being a genius for Brown. There had been times when he had done full justice to

the way it kept him up; now, however, it was almost the worst of the avalanche. 'Don't trouble about me,' he went on insincerely and looking askance through his window again at the bright and beautiful world. 'Perhaps it will rain—that *may* not be over. I do love the rain,' he weakly pursued. 'Perhaps, better still, it will snow.'

Brown now had indeed a perceptible expression, and the expression was of fear. 'Snow, sir—the end of May?' Without pressing this point he looked at his watch. 'You'll feel better when you've had breakfast.'

'I dare say,' said Dane, whom breakfast struck in fact as a pleasant alternative to opening letters. 'I'll come in immediately.'

'But without waiting——?'

'Waiting for what?'

Brown at last, under his apprehension, had his first lapse from logic, which he betrayed by hesitating in the evident hope his companion might by a flash of remembrance relieve him of an invidious duty. But the only flashes now were the good man's own. 'You say you can't forget, sir; but you do forget——'

'Is it anything very horrible?' Dane broke in.

Brown hung fire. 'Only the gentleman you told me you had asked——'

Dane again took him up; horrible or not it came back—indeed its mere coming back classed it. 'To breakfast to-day? It *was* to-day; I see.' It came back, yes, came back; the appointment with the young man—he supposed him young—whose letter, the letter about—what was it?—had struck him. 'Yes, yes; wait, wait.'

'Perhaps he'll do you good, sir,' Brown suggested. 'Sure to—sure to. All right!' Whatever he might do he would at least prevent some other doing: that was present to our friend as, on the vibration of the electric bell at the door of the flat, Brown moved away. Two things in the short interval that followed were present to Dane: his having utterly forgotten the connexion, the whence, whither and why of his guest; and his continued disposition not to touch—no, not with the finger. Ah if he might *never* again touch! All the unbroken seals and neglected appeals lay there while, for a pause he couldn't measure, he stood before the chimney-piece with his hands still in his pockets. He heard a brief exchange of words in the hall, but never afterwards recovered the time taken by Brown to reappear, to precede and announce another person—a person whose name somehow failed to reach Dane's ear. Brown went off again to serve breakfast, leaving host and guest confronted. The duration of this first stage also, later on, defied measurement; but that little mattered, for in the train of what happened came promptly the second, the third, the fourth, the rich succession of the others. Yet what happened was but that Dane took his hand from his pocket, held it straight out and felt it taken. Thus indeed, if he had wanted never again to touch, it was already done.

II

He might have been a week in the place—the scene of his new consciousness—before he spoke at all. The occasion of it then was that one of the quiet figures he had been idly watching drew at last nearer and

showed him a face that was the highest expression—to his pleased but as yet slightly confused perception—of the general charm. What *was* the general charm? He couldn't, for that matter, easily have phrased it; it was such an abyss of negatives, such an absence of positives and of everything. The oddity was that after a minute he was struck as by the reflexion of his own very image in this first converser seated with him, on the easy bench, under the high clear portico and above the wide far-reaching garden, where the things that most showed in the greenness were the surface of still water and the white note of old statues. The absence of everything was, in the aspect of the Brother who had thus informally joined him—a man of his own age, tired distinguished modest kind—really, as he could soon see, but the absence of what he didn't want. He didn't want, for the time, anything but just to *be* there, to steep in the bath. He was in the bath yet, the broad deep bath of stillness. They sat in it together now with the water up to their chins. He hadn't had to talk, he hadn't had to think, he had scarce even had to feel. He had been sunk that way before, sunk—when and where?—in another flood; only a flood of rushing waters in which bumping and gasping were all. *This* was a current so slow and so tepid that one floated practically without motion and without chill. The break of silence was not immediate, though Dane seemed indeed to feel it begin before a sound passed. It could pass quite sufficiently without words that he and his mate were Brothers, and what that meant.

He wondered, but with no want of ease—for

want of ease was impossible—if his friend found in *him* the same likeness, of peace the proof, the gage of what the place could do. The long afternoon crept to its end; the shadows fell further and the sky glowed deeper; but nothing changed—nothing *could* change—in the element itself. It was a conscious security. It was wonderful! Dane had lived into it, but he was still immensely aware. He would have been sorry to lose that, for just this fact as yet, the blest fact of consciousness, seemed the greatest thing of all. Its only fault was that, being in itself such an occupation, so fine an unrest in the heart of gratitude, the life of the day all went to it. But what even then was the harm? He had come only to come, to take what he found. This was the part where the great cloister, enclosed externally on three sides and probably the largest lightest fairest effect, to his charmed sense, that human hands could ever have expressed in dimensions of length and breadth, opened to the south its splendid fourth quarter, turned to the great view an outer gallery that combined with the rest of the portico to form a high dry loggia, such as he a little pretended to himself he had, in the Italy of old days, seen in old cities, old convents, old villas. This recalled disposition of some great abode of an Order, some mild Monte Cassino, some Grande Chartreuse more accessible, was his main term of comparison; but he knew he had really never anywhere beheld anything at once so calculated and so generous.

Three impressions in particular had been with him all the week, and he could not recognise in silence their happy effect on his nerves. How it

was all managed he couldn't have told—he had been content, moreover, till now with his ignorance of cause and pretext; but whenever he chose to listen with a certain intentness he made out as from a distance the sound of slow sweet bells. How could they be so far and yet so audible? How could they be so near and yet so faint? How above all could they, in such an arrest of life, be, to *time* things, so frequent? The very essence of the bliss of Dane's whole change had been precisely that there was nothing now to time. It was the same with the slow footsteps that, always within ear-shot to the vague attention, marked the space and the leisure, seemed, in long cool arcades, lightly to fall and perpetually to recede. This was the second impression, and it melted into the third, as, for that matter, every form of softness, in the great good place, was but a further turn, without jerk or gap, of the endless roll of serenity. The quiet footsteps were quiet figures; the quiet figures that, to the eye, kept the picture human and brought its perfection within reach. This perfection, he felt on the bench by his friend, was now more within reach than ever. His friend at last turned to him a look different from the looks of friends in London clubs.

‘The thing was to find it out!’

It was extraordinary how this remark fitted into his thought. ‘Ah wasn't it? And when I think,’ said Dane, ‘of all the people who haven't and who never will!’ He sighed over these unfortunates with a tenderness that, in its degree, was practically new to him, feeling too how well his companion would know the people he meant. He only meant some, but they were all who'd want it; though of these,

no doubt—well, for reasons, for things that, in the world, he had observed—there would never be too many. Not all perhaps who wanted would really find; but none at least would find who didn't really want. And then what the need would have to have been first! What it at first had had to be for himself! He felt afresh, in the light of his companion's face, what it might still be even when deeply satisfied, as well as what communication was established by the mere common knowledge of it.

'Every man must arrive by himself and on his own feet—isn't that so? We're Brothers here for the time, as in a great monastery, and we immediately think of each other and recognise each other as such; but we must have first got here as we can, and we meet after long journeys by complicated ways. Moreover, we meet—don't we?—with closed eyes.'

'Ah don't speak as if we were dead!' Dane laughed.

'I shan't mind death if it's like this,' his friend replied.

It was too obvious, as Dane gazed before him, that one wouldn't; but after a moment he asked with the first articulation as yet of his most elementary wonder: 'Where is it?'

'I shouldn't be surprised if it were much nearer than one ever suspected.'

'Nearer "town," do you mean?'

'Nearer everything—nearer every one.'

George Dane thought. 'Would it be somewhere for instance down in Surrey?'

His Brother met him on this with a shade of reluctance. 'Why should we call it names? It must have a climate, you see.'

'Yes,' Dane happily mused; 'without that——!' All it so securely did have overwhelmed him again, and he couldn't help breaking out: '*What is it?*'

'Oh it's positively a part of our ease and our rest and our change, I think, that we don't at all know and that we may really call it, for that matter, anything in the world we like—the thing for instance we love it most for being.'

'I know what *I* call it,' said Dane after a moment. Then as his friend listened with interest: 'Just simply "The Great Good Place."'

'I see—what can you say more? I've put it to myself perhaps a little differently.' They sat there as innocently as small boys confiding to each other the names of toy animals. "'The Great Want Met.'"

'Ah yes—that's it!'

'Isn't it enough for us that it's a place carried on for our benefit so admirably that we strain our ears in vain for a creak of the machinery! Isn't it enough for us that it's simply a thorough hit?'

'Ah a hit!' Dane benignantly murmured.

'It does for us what it pretends to do,' his companion went on; 'the mystery isn't deeper than that. The thing's probably simple enough in fact, and on a thoroughly practical basis; only it has had its origin in a splendid thought, in a real stroke of genius.'

'Yes,' Dane returned, 'in a sense—on somebody or other's part—so exquisitely personal!'

'Precisely—it rests, like all good things, on experience. The "great want" comes home—that's the great thing it does! On the day it came home to the right mind this dear place was constituted. It always moreover in the long run *has* been met—

it always must be. How can it not require to be, more and more, as pressure of every sort grows?’

Dane, with his hands folded in his lap, took in these words of wisdom. ‘Pressure of every sort is growing!’ he placidly observed.

‘I see well enough what that fact has done to *you*,’ his Brother declared.

Dane smiled. ‘I couldn’t have borne it longer. I don’t know what would have become of me.’

‘I know what would have become of *me*.’

‘Well, it’s the same thing.’

‘Yes,’ said Dane’s companion, ‘it’s doubtless the same thing.’ On which they sat in silence a little, seeming pleasantly to follow, in the view of the green garden, the vague movements of the monster—madness, surrender, collapse—they had escaped. Their bench was like a box at the opera. ‘And I may perfectly, you know,’ the Brother pursued, ‘have seen you before. I may even have known you well. We don’t know.’

They looked at each other again serenely enough, and at last Dane said: ‘No, we don’t know.’

‘That’s what I meant by our coming with our eyes closed. Yes—there’s something out. There’s a gap, a link missing, the great hiatus!’ the Brother laughed. ‘It’s as simple a story as the old old rupture—the break that lucky Catholics have always been able to make, that they’re still, with their innumerable religious houses, able to make, by going into “retreat.” I don’t speak of the pious exercises—I speak only of the material simplification. I don’t speak of the putting off of one’s self; I speak only—if one has a self worth sixpence—of the getting it back. The place, the time, the way

were, for those of the old persuasion, always there—are indeed practically there for them as much as ever. They can always get off—the blessed houses receive. So it was high time that we—we of the great Protestant peoples, still more, if possible, in the sensitive individual case, overscored and overwhelmed, still more congested with mere quantity and prostituted, through our “enterprise,” to mere profanity—should learn how to get off, should find somewhere *our* retreat and remedy. There was such a huge chance for it!

Dane laid his hand on his companion's arm. ‘It's charming how when we speak for ourselves we speak for each other. That was exactly what I said!’ He had fallen to recalling from over the gulf the last occasion.

The Brother, as if it would do them both good, only desired to draw him out. ‘What you “said” ——?’

‘To *him*—that morning.’ Dane caught a far bell again and heard a slow footstep. A quiet presence passed somewhere—neither of them turned to look. What was little by little more present to him was the perfect taste. It was supreme—it was everywhere. ‘I just dropped my burden—and he received it.’

‘And was it very great?’

‘Oh such a load!’ Dane said with gaiety.

‘Trouble, sorrow, doubt?’

‘Oh no—worse than that!’

‘Worse?’

‘“Success”—the vulgarest kind!’ He mentioned it now as with amusement.

‘Ah I know that too! No one in future, as things are going, will be able to face success.’

'Without something of this sort—never. The better it is the worse—the greater the deadlier. But my one pain here,' Dane continued, 'is in thinking of my poor friend.'

'The person to whom you've already alluded?'

He tenderly assented. 'My substitute in the world. Such an unutterable benefactor. He turned up that morning when everything had somehow got on my nerves, when the whole great globe indeed, nerves or no nerves, seemed to have appallingly squeezed itself into my study and to be bent on simply swelling there. It wasn't a question of nerves, it was a mere question of the dislodgement and derangement of everything—of a general submersion by our eternal too much. I didn't know *où donner de la tête*—I couldn't have gone a step further.'

The intelligence with which the Brother listened kept them as children feeding from the same bowl. 'And then you got the tip?'

'I got the tip!' Dane happily sighed.

'Well, we all get it. But I dare say differently.'

'Then how did *you*——?'

The Brother hesitated, smiling. 'You tell me first.'

III

'Well,' said George Dane, 'it was a young man I had never seen—a man at any rate much younger than myself—who had written to me and sent me some article, some book. I read the stuff, was much struck with it, told him so and thanked him—on which of course I heard from him again. Ah *that* —!' Dane comically sighed. 'He asked me things

—his questions were interesting; but to save time and writing I said to him: "Come to see me—we can talk a little; but all I can give you is half an hour at breakfast." He arrived to the minute on a day when more than ever in my life before I seemed, as it happened, in the endless press and stress, to have lost possession of my soul and to be surrounded only with the affairs of other people, smothered in mere irrelevant importunity. It made me literally ill—made me feel as I had never felt that should I once really for an hour lose hold of the thing itself, the thing that did matter and that I was trying for, I should never recover it again. The wild waters would close over me and I should drop straight to the dark depths where the vanquished dead lie.'

'I follow you every step of your way,' said the friendly Brother. 'The wild waters, you mean, of our horrible time.'

'Of our horrible time precisely. Not of course—as we sometimes dream—of any other.'

'Yes, any other's only a dream. We really know none but our own.'

'No, thank God—that's enough,' Dane contentedly smiled. 'Well, my young man turned up, and I hadn't been a minute in his presence before making out that practically it would be in him somehow or other to help me. He came to me with envy, envy extravagant—really passionate. I was, heaven save us, the great "success" for him; he himself was starved and broken and beaten. How can I say what passed between us?—it was so strange, so swift, so much a matter, from one to the other, of instant perception and agreement. He was so clever and haggard and hungry!'

'Hungry?' the Brother asked.

'I don't mean for bread, though he had none too much, I think, even of that. I mean for—well, what I had and what I was a monument of to him as I stood there up to my neck in preposterous evidence. He, poor chap, had been for ten years serenading closed windows and had never yet caused a shutter to show that it stirred. *My* dim blind was the first raised to him an inch; my reading of his book, my impression of it, my note and my invitation, formed literally the only response ever dropped into his dark alley. He saw in my littered room, my shattered day, my bored face and spoiled temper—it's embarrassing, but I must tell you—the very proof of my pudding, the very blaze of my glory. And he saw in my repletion and my "re-nown"—deluded innocent!—what he had yearned for in vain.'

'What he had yearned for was to *be* you,' said the Brother. Then he added: 'I see where you're coming out.'

'At my saying to him by the end of five minutes: "My dear fellow, I wish you'd just try it—wish you'd for a while just *be* me!" You go straight to the mark, good Brother, and that was exactly what occurred—extraordinary though it was that we should both have understood. I saw what he could give, and he did too. He saw moreover what I could take; in fact what he saw was wonderful!'

'He must be very remarkable!' Dane's converser laughed.

'There's no doubt of it whatever—far more remarkable than I. That's just the reason why what I put to him in joke—with a fantastic desperate

irony—became, in his hands, with his vision of his chance, the blessed means and measure of my sitting on this spot in your company. "Oh if I could just *shift* it all—make it straight over for an hour to other shoulders! If there only *were* a pair!"—that's the way I put it to him. And then at something in his face, "Would *you*, by a miracle, undertake it?" I asked. I let him know all it meant—how it meant that he should at that very moment step in. It meant that he should finish my work and open my letters and keep my engagements and be subject, for better or worse, to my contacts and complications. It meant that he should live with my life and think with my brain and write with my hand and speak with my voice. It meant above all that I should get off. He accepted with greatness—rose to it like a hero. Only he said: "What will become of *you*?"

"There was the rub!" the Brother admitted.

'Ah but only for a minute. He came to my help again,' Dane pursued, 'when he saw I couldn't quite meet that, could at least only say that I wanted to think, wanted to cease, wanted to do the thing itself—the thing that mattered and that I was trying for, miserable me, and that thing only—and therefore wanted first of all really to see it again, planted out, crowded out, frozen out as it now so long had been. "I know what you want," he after a moment quietly remarked to me. "Ah what I want doesn't exist!" "I know what you want," he repeated. At that I began to believe him.'

'Had you any idea yourself?' the Brother's attention breathed.

'Oh yes,' said Dane, 'and it was just my idea that

made me despair. There it was as sharp as possible in my imagination and my longing—there it was so utterly *not* in the fact. We were sitting together on my sofa as we waited for breakfast. He presently laid his hand on my knee—showed me a face that the sudden great light in it had made, for me, indescribably beautiful. "It exists—it exists," he at last said. And so I remember we sat a while and looked at each other, with the final effect of my finding that I absolutely believed him. I remember we weren't at all solemn—we smiled with the joy of discoverers. He was as glad as I—he was tremendously glad. That came out in the whole manner of his reply to the appeal that broke from me: "Where is it then in God's name? Tell me without delay where it is!"

The Brother had bent such a sympathy! 'He gave you the address?'

'He was thinking it out—feeling for it, catching it. He has a wonderful head of his own and must be making of the whole thing, while we sit here patching and gossiping, something much better than ever *I* did. The mere sight of his face, the sense of his hand on my knee, made me, after a little, feel that he not only knew what I wanted but was getting nearer to it than I could have got in ten years. He suddenly sprang up and went over to my study-table—sat straight down there as if to write me my prescription or my passport. Then it was—at the mere sight of his back, which was turned to me—that I felt the spell work. I simply sat and watched him with the queerest deepest sweetest sense in the world—the sense of an ache that had stopped. All life was lifted; I

myself at least was somehow off the ground. He was already where I had been.'

'And where were you?' the Brother amusedly asked.

'Just on the sofa always, leaning back on the cushion and feeling a delicious ease. He was already me.'

'And who were *you*?' the Brother continued.

'Nobody. That was the fun.'

'That *is* the fun,' said the Brother with a sigh like soft music.

Dane echoed the sigh, and, as nobody talking with nobody, they sat there together still and watched the sweet wide picture darken into tepid night.

IV

At the end of three weeks—so far as time was distinct—Dane began to feel there was something he had recovered. It was the thing they never named—partly for want of the need and partly for lack of the word; for what indeed was the description that would cover it all? The only real need was to know it, to see it in silence. Dane had a private practical sign for it, which, however, he had appropriated by theft—'the vision and the faculty divine.' That doubtless was a flattering phrase for his idea of his genius; the genius was at all events what he had been in danger of losing and had at last held by a thread that might at any moment have broken. The change was that little by little his hold had grown firmer, so that he drew in the line—more and more each day—with a pull he was delighted to find it would bear. The mere dream-

sweetness of the place was superseded; it was more and more a world of reason and order, of sensible visible arrangement. It ceased to be strange—it was high triumphant clearness. He cultivated, however, but vaguely the question of where he was, finding it near enough the mark to be almost sure that if he wasn't in Kent he was then probably in Hampshire. He paid for everything but that—that wasn't one of the items. Payment, he had soon learned, was definite; it consisted of sovereigns and shillings—just like those of the world he had left, only parted with more ecstatically—that he committed, in his room, to a fixed receptacle and that were removed in his absence by one of the unobtrusive effaced agents (shadows projected on the hours like the noiseless march of the sundial) that were always at work. The scene had whole sides that reminded and resembled, and a pleased resigned perception of these things was at once the effect and the cause of its grace.

Dane picked out of his dim past a dozen halting similes. The sacred silent convent was one; another was the bright country-house. He did the place no outrage to liken it to an hotel; he permitted himself on occasion to feel it suggest a club. Such images, however, but flickered and went out—they lasted only long enough to light up the difference. An hotel without noise, a club without newspapers—when he turned his face to what it was 'without' the view opened wide. The only approach to a real analogy was in himself and his companions. They were brothers, guests, members; they were even, if one liked—and they didn't in the least mind what they were called—'regular boarders.' It

wasn't they who made the conditions, it was the conditions that made them. These conditions found themselves accepted, clearly, with an appreciation, with a rapture, it was rather to be called, that proceeded, as the very air that pervaded them and the force that sustained, from their quiet and noble assurance. They combined to form the large simple idea of a general refuge—an image of embracing arms, of liberal accommodation. What was the effect really but the poetisation by perfect taste of a type common enough? There was no daily miracle; the perfect taste, with the aid of space, did the trick. What underlay and overhung it all, better yet, Dane mused, was some original inspiration, but confirmed, unquenched, some happy thought of an individual breast. It had been born somehow and somewhere—it had had to insist on being—the blest conception. The author might remain in the obscure, for that was part of the perfection; personal service so hushed and regulated that you scarce caught it in the act and only knew it by its results. Yet the wise mind was everywhere—the whole thing infallibly centred at the core in a consciousness. And what a consciousness it had been, Dane thought, a consciousness how like his own! The wise mind had felt, the wise mind had suffered; then, for all the worried company of minds, the wise mind had seen a chance. Of the creation thus arrived at you could none the less never have said if it were the last echo of the old or the sharpest note of the modern.

Dane again and again, among the far bells and the soft footfalls, in cool cloister and warm garden, found himself wanting not to know more and yet

liking not to know less. It was part of the high style and the grand manner that there was no personal publicity, much less any personal reference. Those things were in the world—in what he had left; there was no vulgarity here of credit or claim or fame. The real exquisite was to be without the complication of an identity, and the greatest boon of all, doubtless, the solid security, the clear confidence one could feel in the keeping of the contract. That was what had been most in the wise mind—the importance of the absolute sense, on the part of its beneficiaries, that what was offered was guaranteed. They had no concern but to pay—the wise mind knew what they paid for. It was present to Dane each hour that he could never be overcharged. Oh the deep deep bath, the soft cool plash in the stillness!—this, time after time, as if under regular treatment, a sublimated German ‘cure,’ was the vivid name for his luxury. The inner life woke up again, and it was the inner life, for people of his generation, victims of the modern madness, mere maniacal extension and motion, that was returning health. He had talked of independence and written of it, but what a cold flat word it had been! This was the wordless fact itself—the uncontested possession of the long sweet stupid day. The fragrance of flowers just wandered through the void, and the quiet recurrence of delicate plain fare in a high clean refectory where the soundless simple service was a triumph of art. That, as he analysed, remained the constant explanation: all the sweetness and serenity were created calculated things. He analysed, however, but in a desultory way and with a positive delight

in the residuum of mystery, that made for the great agent in the background the innermost shrine of the idol of a temple; there were odd moments for it, mild meditations when, in the broad cloister of peace or some garden-nook where the air was light, a special glimpse of beauty or reminder of felicity seemed, in passing, to hover and linger. In the mere ecstasy of change that had at first possessed him he hadn't discriminated—had only let himself sink, as I have mentioned, down to hushed depths. Then had come the slow soft stages of intelligence and notation, more marked and more fruitful perhaps after that long talk with his mild mate in the twilight, and seeming to wind up the process by putting the key into his hand. This key, pure gold, was simply the cancelled list. Slowly and blissfully he read into the general wealth of his comfort all the particular absences of which it was composed. One by one he touched, as it were, all the things it was such rapture to be without.

It was the paradise of his own room that was most indebted to them—a great square fair chamber, all beautified with omissions, from which, high up, he looked over a long valley to a far horizon, and in which he was vaguely and pleasantly reminded of some old Italian picture, some Carpaccio or some early Tuscan, the representation of a world without newspapers and letters, without telegrams and photographs, without the dreadful fatal too much. There, for a blessing, he *could* read and write; there above all he could do nothing—he could live. And there were all sorts of freedoms—always, for the occasion, the particular right one. He could bring a book from the library—he could bring two, he could

bring three. An effect produced by the charming place was that for some reason he never wanted to bring more. The library was a benediction—high and clear and plain like everything else, but with something, in all its arched amplitude, unconfused and brave and gay. He should never forget, he knew, the throb of immediate perception with which he first stood there, a single glance round sufficing so to show him that it would give him what for years he had desired. He had not had detachment, but there was detachment here—the sense of a great silver bowl from which he could ladle up the melted hours. He strolled about from wall to wall, too pleasantly in tune on that occasion to sit down punctually or to choose; only recognising from shelf to shelf every dear old book that he had had to put off or never returned to; every deep distinct voice of another time that in the hubbub of the world he had had to take for lost and unheard. He came back of course soon, came back every day; enjoyed there, of all the rare strange moments, those that were at once most quickened and most caught—moments in which every apprehension counted double and every act of the mind was a lover's embrace. It was the quarter he perhaps, as the days went on, liked best; though indeed it only shared with the rest of the place, with every aspect to which his face happened to be turned, the power to remind him of the masterly general care.

There were times when he looked up from his book to lose himself in the mere tone of the picture that never failed at any moment or at any angle. The picture was always there, yet was made up of

things common enough. It was in the way an open window in a broad recess let in the pleasant morning; in the way the dry air pricked into faint freshness the gilt of old bindings; in the way an empty chair beside a table uncluttered showed a volume just laid down; in the way a happy Brother—as detached as one's self and with his innocent back presented—lingered before a shelf with the slow sound of turned pages. It was a part of the whole impression that, by some extraordinary law, one's vision seemed less from the facts than the facts from one's vision; that the elements were determined at the moment by the moment's need or the moment's sympathy. What most prompted this reflexion was the degree in which Dane had after a while a consciousness of company. After that talk with the good Brother on the bench there were other good Brothers in other places—always in cloister or garden some figure that stopped if he himself stopped and with which a greeting became, in the easiest way in the world, a sign of the diffused amenity and the consecrating ignorance. For always, always, in all contacts, was the balm of a happy blank. What he had felt the first time recurred: the friend was always new and yet at the same time—it was amusing, not disturbing—suggested the possibility that he might be but an old one altered. That was only delightful—as positively delightful in the particular, the actual conditions as it might have been the reverse in the conditions abolished. These others, the abolished, came back to Dane at last so easily that he could exactly measure each difference, but with what he had finally been hustled on to hate in them robbed

of its terror in consequence of something that had happened. What had happened was that in tranquil walks and talks the deep spell had worked and he had got his soul again. He had drawn in by this time, with his lightened hand, the whole of the long line, and that fact just dangled at the end. He could put his other hand on it, he could unhook it, he was once more in possession. This, as it befell, was exactly what he supposed he must have said to a comrade beside whom, one afternoon in the cloister, he found himself measuring steps.

'Oh it comes—comes of itself, doesn't it, thank goodness?—just by the simple fact of finding room and time!'

The comrade was possibly a novice or in a different stage from his own; there was at any rate a vague envy in the recognition that shone out of the fatigued yet freshened face. 'It has come to *you* then?—you've got what you wanted?' That was the gossip and interchange that could pass to and fro. Dane, years before, had gone in for three months of hydropathy, and there was a droll echo, in this scene, of the old questions of the water-cure, the questions asked in the periodical pursuit of the 'reaction'—the ailment, the progress of each, the action of the skin and the state of the appetite. Such memories worked in now—all familiar reference, all easy play of mind; and among them our friends, round and round, fraternised ever so softly till, suddenly stopping short, Dane, with a hand on his companion's arm, broke into the happiest laugh he had yet sounded.

V

'Why it's raining!' And he stood and looked at the splash of the shower and the shine of the wet leaves. It was one of the summer sprinkles that bring out sweet smells.

'Yes—but why not?' his mate demanded.

'Well—because it's so charming. It's so exactly right.'

'But everything *is*. Isn't that just why we're here?'

'Just exactly,' Dane said: 'only I've been living in the beguiled supposition that we've somehow or other a climate.'

'So have I, so I daresay has every one. Isn't that the blest moral?—that we live in beguiled suppositions. They come so easily here, where nothing contradicts them.' The good Brother looked placidly forth—Dane could identify his phase. 'A climate doesn't consist in its never raining, does it?'

'No, I daresay not. But somehow the good I've got has been half the great easy absence of all that friction of which the question of weather mostly forms a part—has been indeed largely the great easy perpetual air-bath.'

'Ah yes—that's not a delusion; but perhaps the sense comes a little from our breathing an emptier medium. There are fewer things *in* it! Leave people alone, at all events, and the air's what they take to. Into the closed and the stuffy they have to be driven. I've had too—I think we must all have—a fond sense of the south.'

'But imagine it,' said Dane, laughing, 'in the

beloved British islands and so near as we are to Bradford!’

His friend was ready enough to imagine. ‘To Bradford?’ he asked, quite unperturbed. ‘How near?’

Dane’s gaiety grew. ‘Oh it doesn’t matter!’

His friend, quite unmystified, accepted it. ‘There are things to puzzle out—otherwise it would be dull. It seems to me one can puzzle them.’

‘It’s because we’re so well disposed,’ Dane said.

‘Precisely—we find good in everything.’

‘In everything,’ Dane went on. ‘The conditions settle that—they determine us.’

They resumed their stroll, which evidently represented on the good Brother’s part infinite agreement. ‘Aren’t they probably in fact very simple?’ he presently inquired. ‘Isn’t simplification the secret?’

‘Yes, but applied with a tact!’

‘There it is. The thing’s so perfect that it’s open to as many interpretations as any other great work—a poem of Goethe, a dialogue of Plato, a symphony of Beethoven.’

‘It simply stands quiet, you mean,’ said Dane, ‘and lets us call it names?’

‘Yes, but all such loving ones. We’re “staying” with some one—some delicious host or hostess who never shows.’

‘It’s liberty-hall—absolutely,’ Dane assented.

‘Yes—or a convalescent home.’

To this, however, Dane demurred. ‘Ah that, it seems to me, scarcely puts it. You weren’t *ill*—were you? I’m very sure *I* really wasn’t. I was only, as the world goes, too “beastly well”!’

The good Brother wondered. 'But if we couldn't keep it up——?'

'We couldn't keep it *down*—that was all the matter!'

'I see—I see.' The good Brother sighed contentedly; after which he brought out again with kindly humour: 'It's a sort of kindergarten!'

'The next thing you'll be saying that we're babes at the breast!'

'Of some great mild invisible mother who stretches away into space and whose lap's the whole valley——?'

'And her bosom'—Dane completed the figure—'the noble eminence of our hill? That will do; anything will do that covers the essential fact.'

'And what do you call the essential fact?'

'Why that—as in old days on Swiss lakesides—we're *en pension*.'

The good Brother took this gently up. 'I remember—I remember: seven francs a day without wine! But alas it's more than seven francs here.'

'Yes, it's considerably more,' Dane had to confess. 'Perhaps it isn't particularly cheap.'

'Yet should you call it particularly dear?' his friend after a moment inquired.

George Dane had to think. 'How do I know, after all? What practice has one ever had in estimating the inestimable? Particular cheapness certainly isn't the note we feel struck all round; but don't we fall naturally into the view that there *must* be a price to anything so awfully sane?'

The good Brother in his turn reflected. 'We fall into the view that it must pay—that it does pay.'

'Oh yes; it does pay!' Dane eagerly echoed.

'If it didn't it wouldn't last. It has *got* to last of course!' he declared.

'So that we can come back?'

'Yes—think of knowing that we shall be able to!'

They pulled up again at this and, facing each other, thought of it, or at any rate pretended to; for what was really in their eyes was the dread of a loss of the clue. 'Oh when we want it again we shall find it,' said the good Brother. 'If the place really pays it will keep on.'

'Yes, that's the beauty; that it isn't, thank goodness, carried on only for love.'

'No doubt, no doubt; and yet, thank goodness, there's love in it too.' They had lingered as if, in the mild moist air, they were charmed with the patter of rain and the way the garden drank it. After a little, however, it did look rather as if they were trying to talk each other out of a faint small fear. They saw the increasing rage of life and the recurrent need, and they wondered proportionately whether to return to the front when their hour should sharply strike would be the end of the dream. Was this a threshold perhaps, after all, that could only be crossed one way? They must return to the front sooner or later—that was certain: for each his hour would strike. The flower would have been gathered and the trick played—the sands would in short have run.

There, in its place, *was* life—with all its rage; the vague unrest of the need for action knew it again, the stir of the faculty that had been refreshed and reconsecrated. They seemed each, thus confronted, to close their eyes a moment for dizziness; then they were again at peace and the

Brother's confidence rang out. 'Oh we shall meet!'

'Here, do you mean?'

'Yes—and I daresay in the world too.'

'But we shan't recognise or know,' said Dane.

'In the world, do you mean?'

'Neither in the world nor here.'

'Not a bit—not the least little bit, you think?'

Dane turned it over. 'Well, so is it that it seems to me all best to hang together. But we shall see.'

His friend happily concurred. 'We shall see.' And at this, for farewell, the Brother held out his hand.

'You're going?' Dane asked.

'No, but I thought *you* were.'

It was odd, but at this Dane's hour seemed to strike—his consciousness to crystallise. 'Well, I am. I've got it. You stay?' he went on.

'A little longer.'

Dane hesitated. 'You haven't yet got it?'

'Not altogether—but I think it's coming.'

'Good!' Dane kept his hand, giving it a final shake, and at that moment the sun glimmered again through the shower, but with the rain still falling on the hither side of it and seeming to patter even more in the brightness. 'Hallo—how charming!'

The Brother looked a moment from under the high arch—then again turned his face to our friend. He gave this time his longest happiest sigh. 'Oh it's all right!'

But why was it, Dane after a moment found himself wondering, that in the act of separation his own hand was so long retained? Why but through a queer phenomenon of change, on the spot, in his

companion's face—change that gave it another, but an increasing and above all a much more familiar identity, an identity not beautiful, but more and more distinct, an identity with that of his servant, with the most conspicuous, the physiognomic seat of the public propriety of Brown? To this anomaly his eyes slowly opened; it was not his good Brother, it was verily Brown who possessed his hand. If his eyes had to open it was because they had been closed and because Brown appeared to think he had better wake up. So much as this Dane took in, but the effect of his taking it was a relapse into darkness, a recontraction of the lids just prolonged enough to give Brown time, on a second thought, to withdraw his touch and move softly away. Dane's next consciousness was that of the desire to make sure he *was* away, and this desire had somehow the result of dissipating the obscurity. The obscurity was completely gone by the time he had made out that the back of a person writing at his study-table was presented to him. He recognised a portion of a figure that he had somewhere described to somebody—the intent shoulders of the unsuccessful young man who had come that bad morning to breakfast. It was strange, he at last mused, but the young man was still there. How long had he stayed—days, weeks, months? He was exactly in the position in which Dane had last seen him. Everything—stranger still—was exactly in that position; everything at least but the light of the window, which came in from another quarter and showed a different hour. It wasn't after breakfast now; it was after—well, what? He suppressed a gasp—it was after every-

thing. And yet—quite literally—there were but two other differences. One of these was that if he was still on the sofa he was now lying down; the other was the patter on the glass that showed him how the rain—the great rain of the night—had come back. It was the rain of the night, yet when had he last heard it? But two minutes before? Then how many were there before the young man at the table, who seemed intensely occupied, found a moment to look round at him and, on meeting his open eyes, get up and draw near?

‘You’ve slept all day,’ said the young man.

‘All day?’

The young man looked at his watch. ‘From ten to six. You were extraordinarily tired. I just after a bit let you alone, and you were soon off.’ Yes, that was it; he had been ‘off’—off, off, off. He began to fit it together: while he had been off the young man had been on. But there were still some few confusions; Dane lay looking up. ‘Everything’s done,’ the young man continued.

‘Everything?’

‘Everything.’

Dane tried to take it all in, but was embarrassed and could only say weakly and quite apart from the matter: ‘I’ve been so happy!’

‘So have I,’ said the young man. He positively looked so; seeing which George Dane wondered afresh, and then in his wonder read it indeed quite as another face, quite, in a puzzling way, as another person’s. Every one was a little some one else. While he asked himself who else then the young man was, this benefactor, struck by his appealing stare, broke again into perfect cheer. ‘It’s all right!’

That answered Dane's question; the face was the face turned to him by the good Brother there in the portico while they listened together to the rustle of the shower. It was all queer, but all pleasant and all distinct, so distinct that the last words in his ear—the same from both quarters—appeared the effect of a single voice. Dane rose and looked about his room, which seemed disencumbered, different, twice as large. It *was* all right.

THE UPPER BERTH

By F. MARION CRAWFORD

I

SOMEBODY asked for the cigars. We had talked long, and the conversation was beginning to languish; the tobacco smoke had got into the heavy curtains, the wine had got into those brains which were liable to become heavy, and it was already perfectly evident that, unless somebody did something to rouse our oppressed spirits, the meeting would soon come to its natural conclusion, and we, the guests, would speedily go home to bed, and most certainly to sleep. No one had said anything very remarkable; it may be that no one had anything very remarkable to say. Jones had given us every particular of his last hunting adventure in Yorkshire. Mr. Tompkins, of Boston, had explained at elaborate length those working principles, by the due and careful maintenance of which the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fé Railroad not only extended its territory, increased its departmental influence, and transported live stock without starving them to death before the day of actual delivery, but, also, had for years succeeded in deceiving those passengers who bought its tickets into the fallacious belief that the corporation aforesaid was really able to transport human life without destroying it. Signor Tombola had endeavoured to persuade us, by arguments which we

took no trouble to oppose, that the unity of his country in no way resembled the average modern torpedo, carefully planned, constructed with all the skill of the greatest European arsenals, but, when constructed, destined to be directed by feeble hands into a region where it must undoubtedly explode, unseen, unfeared, and unheard, into the illimitable wastes of political chaos.

It is unnecessary to go into further details. The conversation had assumed proportions which would have bored Prometheus on his rock, which would have driven Tantalus to distraction, and which would have impelled Ixion to seek relaxation in the simple but instructive dialogues of Herr Ollendorff, rather than submit to the greater evil of listening to our talk. We had sat at table for hours; we were bored, we were tired, and nobody showed signs of moving.

Somebody called for cigars. We all instinctively looked towards the speaker. Brisbane was a man of five-and-thirty years of age, and remarkable for those gifts which chiefly attract the attention of men. He was a strong man. The external proportions of his figure presented nothing extraordinary to the common eye, though his size was above the average. He was a little over six feet in height, and moderately broad in the shoulder; he did not appear to be stout, but, on the other hand, he was certainly not thin; his small head was supported by a strong and sinewy neck; his broad, muscular hands appeared to possess a peculiar skill in breaking walnuts without the assistance of the ordinary cracker, and, seeing him in profile, one could not help remarking the extraordinary breadth of his

sleeves, and the unusual thickness of his chest. He was one of those men who are commonly spoken of among men as deceptive; that is to say, that though he looked exceedingly strong he was in reality very much stronger than he looked. Of his features I need say little. His head is small, his hair is thin, his eyes are blue, his nose is large, he has a small moustache, and a square jaw. Everybody knows Brisbane, and when he asked for a cigar everybody looked at him.

'It is a very singular thing,' said Brisbane.

Everybody stopped talking. Brisbane's voice was not loud, but possessed a peculiar quality of penetrating general conversation, and cutting it like a knife. Everybody listened. Brisbane, perceiving that he had attracted their general attention, lit his cigar with great equanimity.

'It is very singular,' he continued, 'that thing about ghosts. People are always asking whether anybody has seen a ghost. I have.'

'Bosh! What, you? You don't mean to say so, Brisbane? Well, for a man of his intelligence!'

A chorus of exclamations greeted Brisbane's remarkable statement. Everybody called for cigars, and Stubbs, the butler, suddenly appeared from the depths of nowhere with a fresh bottle of dry champagne. The situation was saved; Brisbane was going to tell a story.

I am an old sailor, said Brisbane, and as I have to cross the Atlantic pretty often, I have my favourites. Most men have their favourites. I have seen a man wait in a Broadway bar for three-quarters of an hour for a particular car which he liked. I believe the bar-keeper made at least one-third of his living

by that man's preference. I have a habit of waiting for certain ships when I am obliged to cross that duck-pond. It may be a prejudice, but I was never cheated out of a good passage but once in my life. I remember it very well; it was a warm morning in June, and the Custom House officials, who were hanging about waiting for a steamer already on her way up from the Quarantine, presented a peculiarly hazy and thoughtful appearance. I had not much luggage—I never have. I mingled with the crowd of passengers, porters, and officious individuals in blue coats and brass buttons, who seemed to spring up like mushrooms from the deck of a moored steamer to obtrude their unnecessary services upon the independent passenger. I have often noticed with a certain interest the spontaneous evolution of these fellows. They are not there when you arrive; five minutes after the pilot has called 'Go ahead!' they, or at least their blue coats and brass buttons, have disappeared from deck and gangway as completely as though they had been consigned to that locker which tradition unanimously ascribes to Davy Jones. But, at the moment of starting, they are there, clean shaved, blue coated, and ravenous for fees. I hastened on board. The *Kamtschatka* was one of my favourite ships. I say was, because she emphatically no longer is. I cannot conceive of any inducement which could entice me to make another voyage in her. Yes, I know what you are going to say. She is uncommonly clean in the run aft, she has enough bluffing off in the bows to keep her dry, and the lower berths are most of them double. She has a lot of advantages, but I won't cross in her again. Excuse the digression. I got on board. I

hailed a steward, whose red nose and redder whiskers were equally familiar to me.

'One hundred and five, lower berth,' said I, in the business-like tone peculiar to men who think no more of crossing the Atlantic than taking a whisky cocktail at down-town Delmonico's.

The steward took my portmanteau, great-coat, and rug. I shall never forget the expression of his face. Not that he turned pale. It is maintained by the most eminent divines that even miracles cannot change the course of nature. I have no hesitation in saying that he did not turn pale; but, from his expression, I judged that he was either about to shed tears, to sneeze, or to drop my portmanteau. As the latter contained two bottles of particularly fine old sherry presented to me for my voyage by my old friend Snigginson van Pickyns, I felt extremely nervous. But the steward did none of these things.

'Well, I'm d——d!' said he in a low voice, and led the way.

I supposed my Hermes, as he led me to the lower regions, had had a little grog, but I said nothing, and followed him. 105 was on the port side, well aft. There was nothing remarkable about the state-room. The lower berth, like most of those upon the *Kamtschatka*, was double. There was plenty of room; there was the usual washing apparatus, calculated to convey an idea of luxury to the mind of a North American Indian; there were the usual inefficient racks of brown wood, in which it is more easy to hang a large-sized umbrella than the common tooth-brush of commerce. Upon the uninviting mattresses were carefully folded together

those blankets which a great modern humorist has aptly compared to cold buckwheat cakes. The question of towels was left entirely to the imagination. The glass decanters were filled with a transparent liquid faintly tinged with brown, but from which an odour less faint, but not more pleasing, ascended to the nostrils, like a far-off sea-sick reminiscence of oily machinery. Sad-coloured curtains half-closed the upper berth. The hazy June daylight shed a faint illumination upon the desolate little scene. Ugh! how I hate that state-room!

The steward deposited my traps and looked at me, as though he wanted to get away—probably in search of more passengers and more fees. It is always a good plan to start in favour with those functionaries, and I accordingly gave him certain coins there and then.

‘I’ll try and make yer comfortable all I can,’ he remarked, as he put the coins in his pocket. Nevertheless, there was a doubtful intonation in his voice which surprised me. Possibly his scale of fees had gone up, and he was not satisfied; but on the whole I was inclined to think that, as he himself would have expressed it, he was ‘the better for a glass.’ I was wrong, however, and did the man injustice.

II

Nothing especially worthy of mention occurred during that day. We left the pier punctually, and it was very pleasant to be fairly under way, for the weather was warm and sultry, and the motion of the steamer produced a refreshing breeze. Every-

body knows what the first day at sea is like. People pace the decks and stare at each other, and occasionally meet acquaintances whom they did not know to be on board. There is the usual uncertainty as to whether the food will be good, bad, or indifferent, until the first two meals have put the matter beyond a doubt; there is the usual uncertainty about the weather, until the ship is fairly off Fire Island. The tables are crowded at first, and then suddenly thinned. Pale-faced people spring from their seats and precipitate themselves towards the door, and each old sailor breathes more freely as his sea-sick neighbour rushes from his side, leaving him plenty of elbow-room and an unlimited command over the mustard.

One passage across the Atlantic is very much like another, and we who cross very often do not make the voyage for the sake of novelty. Whales and icebergs are indeed always objects of interest, but, after all, one whale is very much like another whale, and one rarely sees an iceberg at close quarters. To the majority of us the most delightful moment of the day on board an ocean steamer is when we have taken our last turn on deck, have smoked our last cigar, and having succeeded in tiring ourselves, feel at liberty to turn in with a clear conscience. On that first night of the voyage I felt particularly lazy, and went to bed in 105 rather earlier than I usually do. As I turned in, I was amazed to see that I was to have a companion. A portmanteau, very like my own, lay in the opposite corner, and in the upper berth had been deposited a neatly-folded rug, with a stick and umbrella. I had hoped to be alone, and I was disappointed; but I wondered who

my room-mate was to be, and I determined to have a look at him.

Before I had been long in bed he entered. He was, as far as I could see, a very tall man, very thin, very pale, with sandy hair and whiskers and colourless grey eyes. He had about him, I thought, an air of rather dubious fashion; the sort of man you might see in Wall Street, without being able precisely to say what he was doing there—the sort of man who frequents the Café Anglais, who always seems to be alone and who drinks champagne; you might meet him on a racecourse, but he would never appear to be doing anything there either. A little over-dressed—a little odd. There are three or four of his kind on every ocean steamer. I made up my mind that I did not care to make his acquaintance, and I went to sleep saying to myself that I would study his habits in order to avoid him. If he rose early, I would rise late; if he went to bed late, I would go to bed early. I did not care to know him. If you once know people of that kind they are always turning up. Poor fellow! I need not have taken the trouble to come to so many decisions about him, for I never saw him again after that first night in 105.

I was sleeping soundly when I was suddenly waked by a loud noise. To judge from the sound, my room-mate must have sprung with a single leap from the upper berth to the floor. I heard him fumbling with the latch and bolt of the door, which opened almost immediately, and then I heard his footsteps as he ran at full speed down the passage, leaving the door open behind him. The ship was rolling a little, and I expected to hear him stumble

or fall, but he ran as though he were running for his life. The door swung on its hinges with the motion of the vessel, and the sound annoyed me. I got up and shut it, and groped my way back to my berth in the darkness. I went to sleep again; but I have no idea how long I slept.

When I awoke it was still quite dark, but, I felt a disagreeable sensation of cold, and it seemed to me that the air was damp. You know the peculiar smell of a cabin which has been wet with sea-water. I covered myself up as well as I could and dozed off again, framing complaints to be made the next day, and selecting the most powerful epithets in the language. I could hear my room-mate turn over in the upper berth. He had probably returned while I was asleep. Once I thought I heard him groan, and I argued that he was sea-sick. That is particularly unpleasant when one is below. Nevertheless I dozed off and slept till early daylight.

The ship was rolling heavily, much more than on the previous evening, and the grey light which came in through the porthole changed in tint with every movement according as the angle of the vessel's side turned the glass seawards or skywards. It was very cold—unaccountably so for the month of June. I turned my head and looked at the porthole, and I saw to my surprise that it was wide open and hooked back. I believe I swore audibly. Then I got up and shut it. As I turned back I glanced at the upper berth. The curtains were drawn close together; my companion had probably felt cold as well as I. It struck me that I had slept enough. The state-room was uncomfortable, though, strange to say, I could not smell the dampness which had

annoyed me in the night. My room-mate was still asleep—excellent opportunity for avoiding him, so I dressed at once and went on deck. The day was warm and cloudy, with an oily smell on the water. It was seven o'clock as I came out—much later than I had imagined. I came across the doctor, who was taking his first sniff of the morning air. He was a young man from the West of Ireland—a tremendous fellow, with black hair and blue eyes, already inclined to be stout; he had a happy-go-lucky, healthy look about him which was rather attractive.

'Fine morning,' I remarked, by way of introduction.

'Well,' said he, eyeing me with an air of ready interest, 'it's a fine morning and it's not a fine morning. I don't think it's much of a morning.'

'Well, no—it is not so very fine,' said I.

'It's just what I call fuggly weather,' replied the doctor.

'It was very cold last night, I thought,' I remarked. 'However, when I looked about, I found that the porthole was wide open. I had not noticed it when I went to bed. And the state-room was damp, too.'

'Damp!' said he. 'Whereabouts are you?'

'One hundred and five——'

To my surprise the doctor started visibly, and stared at me.

'What is the matter?' I asked.

'Oh—nothing,' he answered; 'only everybody has complained of that state-room for the last three trips.'

'I shall complain too,' I said. 'It has certainly not been properly aired. It is a shame!'

'I don't believe it can be helped,' answered the doctor. 'I believe there is something—well, it is not my business to frighten passengers.'

'You need not be afraid of frightening me,' I replied. 'I can stand any amount of damp. If I should get a bad cold I will come to you.'

I offered the doctor a cigar, which he took and examined very critically.

'It is not so much the damp,' he remarked. 'However, I dare say you will get on very well. Have you a room-mate?'

'Yes; a deuce of a fellow, who bolts out in the middle of the night, and leaves the door open.'

Again the doctor glanced curiously at me. Then he lit the cigar and looked grave.

'Did he come back?' he asked presently.

'Yes. I was asleep, but I waked up, and heard him moving. Then I felt cold and went to sleep again. This morning I found the porthole open.'

'Look here,' said the doctor quietly, 'I don't care much for this ship. I don't care a rap for her reputation. I tell you what I will do. I have a good-sized place up here. I will share it with you, though I don't know you from Adam.'

I was very much surprised at the proposition. I could not imagine why he should take such a sudden interest in my welfare. However, his manner as he spoke of the ship, was peculiar.

'You are very good, doctor,' I said. 'But, really, I believe even now the cabin could be aired, or cleaned out, or something. Why do you not care for the ship?'

'We are not superstitious in our profession, sir,' replied the doctor, 'but the sea makes people so.'

I don't want to prejudice you, and I don't want to frighten you, but if you will take my advice you will move in here. I would as soon see you overboard,' he added earnestly, 'as know that you or any other man was to sleep in 105.'

'Good gracious! Why?' I asked.

'Just because on the last three trips the people who have slept there actually have gone overboard,' he answered gravely.

The intelligence was startling and exceedingly unpleasant, I confess. I looked hard at the doctor to see whether he was making game of me, but he looked perfectly serious. I thanked him warmly for his offer, but told him I intended to be the exception to the rule by which every one who slept in that particular state-room went overboard. He did not say much, but looked grave as ever, and hinted that, before we got across, I should probably reconsider his proposal. In the course of time we went to breakfast, at which only an inconsiderable number of passengers assembled. I noticed that one or two of the officers who breakfasted with us looked grave. After breakfast I went into my state-room in order to get a book. The curtains of the upper berth were still closely drawn. Not a word was to be heard. My room-mate was probably still asleep.

As I came out I met the steward whose business it was to look after me. He whispered that the captain wanted to see me, and then scuttled away down the passage as if very anxious to avoid any questions. I went toward the captain's cabin, and found him waiting for me.

'Sir,' said he, 'I want to ask a favour of you.'

I answered that I would do anything to oblige him.'

'Your room-mate has disappeared,' he said. 'He is known to have turned in early last night. Did you notice anything extraordinary in his manner?'

The question coming, as it did, in exact confirmation of the fears the doctor had expressed half an hour earlier, staggered me.

'You don't mean to say he has gone overboard?' I asked.

'I fear he has,' answered the captain.

'This is the most extraordinary thing——' I began.

'Why?' he asked.

'He is the fourth, then?' I explained. In answer to another question from the captain, I explained without mentioning the doctor, that I had heard the story concerning 105. He seemed very much annoyed at hearing that I knew of it. I told him what had occurred in the night.

'What you say,' he replied, 'coincides almost exactly with what was told me by the room-mates of two of the other three. They bolt out of bed and run down the passage. Two of them were seen to go overboard by the watch; we stopped and lowered boats, but they were not found. Nobody, however, saw or heard the man who was lost last night—if he is really lost. The steward, who is a superstitious fellow, perhaps, and expected something to go wrong, went to look for him this morning, and found his berth empty, but his clothes lying about, just as he had left them. The steward was the only man on board who knew him by sight, and he has been searching everywhere for him. He has disappeared! Now, sir, I want to beg you not to mention the

circumstance to any of the passengers; I don't want the ship to get a bad name, and nothing hangs about an ocean-goer like stories of suicides. You shall have your choice of any one of the officers' cabins you like, including my own, for the rest of the passage. Is that a fair bargain?'

'Very,' said I; 'and I am much obliged to you. But since I am alone, and have the state-room to myself, I would rather not move. If the steward will take out that unfortunate man's things, I would as lief stay where I am. I will not say anything about the matter, and I think I can promise you that I will not follow my room-mate.'

The captain tried to dissuade me from my intention, but I preferred having a state-room alone to being the chum of any officer on board. I do not know whether I acted foolishly, but if I had taken his advice I should have had nothing more to tell. There would have remained the disagreeable coincidence of several suicides occurring among men who had slept in the same cabin, but that would have been all.

That was not the end of the matter, however, by any means. I obstinately made up my mind that I would not be disturbed by such tales, and I even went so far as to argue the question with the captain. There was something wrong about the state-room, I said. It was rather damp. The porthole had been left open last night. My room-mate might have been ill when he came on board, and he might have become delirious after he went to bed. He might even now be hiding somewhere on board, and might be found later. The place ought to be aired and the fastening of the port looked to. If

the captain would give me leave, I would see that what I thought necessary was done immediately.

'Of course you have a right to stay where you are if you please,' he replied, rather petulantly; 'but I wish you would turn out and let me lock the place up, and be done with it.'

I did not see it in the same light, and left the captain, after promising to be silent concerning the disappearance of my companion. The latter had had no acquaintances on board, and was not missed in the course of the day. Towards evening I met the doctor again, and he asked me whether I had changed my mind. I told him I had not.

'Then you will before long,' he said, very gravely.

III

We played whist in the evening, and I went to bed late. I will confess now that I felt a disagreeable sensation when I entered my state-room. I could not help thinking of the tall man I had seen on the previous night, who was now dead, drowned, tossing about in the long swell, two or three hundred miles astern. His face rose very distinctly before me as I undressed, and I even went so far as to draw back the curtains of the upper berth, as though to persuade myself that he was actually gone. I also bolted the door of the state-room. Suddenly I became aware that the porthole was open, and fastened back. This was more than I could stand. I hastily threw on my dressing-gown and went in search of Robert, the steward of my passage. I was very angry, I remember, and when

I found him I dragged him roughly to the door of 105, and pushed him towards the open porthole.

'What the deuce do you mean, you scoundrel, by leaving that port open every night? Don't you know it is against the regulations? Don't you know that if the ship heeled and the water began to come in, ten men could not shut it? I will report you to the captain, you blackguard, for endangering the ship!'

I was exceedingly wroth. The man trembled and turned pale, and then began to shut the round glass plate with the heavy brass fittings.

'Why don't you answer me?' I said roughly.

'If you please, sir,' faltered Robert, 'there's nobody on board as can keep this 'ere port shut at night. You can try it yourself, sir. I aint a-going to stop hany longer on board o' this vessel, sir; I ain't, indeed. But if I was you, sir, I'd just clear out and go and sleep with the surgeon, or something, I would. Look 'ere, sir, is that fastened what you may call securely, or not, sir? Try it, sir, see if it will move a hinch.'

I tried the port, and found it perfectly tight.

'Well, sir,' continued Robert triumphantly, 'I wager my reputation as a A1 steward that in 'arf an hour it will be open again; fastened back, too, sir, that 's the horful thing—fastened back!'

I examined the great screw and the looped nut that ran on it.

'If I find it open in the night, Robert, I will give you a sovereign. It is not possible. You may go.'

'Soverin' did you say, sir? Very good, sir. Thank ye, sir. Good-night, sir. Pleasant reepose, sir, and all manner of hinchantin' dreams, sir.'

Robert scuttled away, delighted at being re-

leased. Of course, I thought he was trying to account for his negligence by a silly story, intended to frighten me, and I disbelieved him. The consequence was that he got his sovereign, and I spent a very peculiarly unpleasant night.

I went to bed, and five minutes after I had rolled myself up in my blankets the inexorable Robert extinguished the light that burned steadily behind the ground-glass pane near the door. I lay quite still in the dark trying to go to sleep, but I soon found that impossible. It had been some satisfaction to be angry with the steward, and the diversion had banished that unpleasant sensation I had at first experienced when I thought of the drowned man who had been my chum; but I was no longer sleepy, and I lay awake for some time, occasionally glancing at the porthole, which I could just see from where I lay, and which, in the darkness, looked like a faintly-luminous soup-plate suspended in blackness. I believe I must have lain there for an hour, and, as I remember, I was just dozing into sleep when I was roused by a draught of cold air, and by distinctly feeling the spray of the sea blown upon my face. I started to my feet, and not having allowed in the dark for the motion of the ship, I was instantly thrown violently across the state-room upon the couch which was placed beneath the porthole. I recovered myself immediately, however, and climbed upon my knees. The porthole was again wide open and fastened back!

Now these things are facts. I was wide awake when I got up, and I should certainly have been waked by the fall had I still been dozing. Moreover,

I bruised my elbows and knees badly, and the bruises were there on the following morning to testify to the fact, if I myself had doubted it. The porthole was wide open and fastened back—a thing so unaccountable that I remember very well feeling astonishment rather than fear when I discovered it. I at once closed the plate again, and screwed down the loop nut with all my strength. It was very dark in the state-room. I reflected that the port had certainly been opened within an hour after Robert had at first shut it in my presence, and I determined to watch it, and see whether it would open again. Those brass fittings are very heavy and by no means easy to move. I could not believe that the clump had been turned by the shaking of the screw. I stood peering out through the thick glass at the alternate white and grey streaks of the sea that foamed beneath the ship's side. I must have remained there a quarter of an hour.

Suddenly, as I stood, I distinctly heard something moving behind me in one of the berths, and a moment afterwards, just as I turned instinctively to look—though I could, of course, see nothing in the darkness—I heard a very faint groan. I sprang across the state-room, and tore the curtains of the upper berth aside, thrusting in my hands to discover if there were any one there. There was some one.

I remember that the sensation as I put my hands forward was as though I were plunging them into the air of a damp cellar, and from behind the curtains came a gust of wind that smelled horribly of stagnant sea-water. I laid hold of something that

had the shape of a man's arm, but was smooth, and wet, and icy cold. But suddenly, as I pulled, the creature sprang violently forward against me, a clammy, oozy mass, as it seemed to me, heavy and wet, yet endowed with a sort of supernatural strength. I reeled across the state-room, and in an instant the door opened and the thing rushed out. I had not had time to be frightened, and quickly recovering myself, I sprang through the door and gave chase at the top of my speed, but I was too late. Ten yards before me I could see—I am sure I saw it—a dark shadow moving in the dimly lighted passage, quickly as the shadow of a fast horse thrown before a dog-cart by the lamp on a dark night. But in a moment it had disappeared, and I found myself holding on to the polished rail that ran along the bulkhead where the passage turned towards the companion. My hair stood on end, and the cold perspiration rolled down my face. I am not ashamed of it in the least: I was very badly frightened.

Still I doubted my senses, and pulled myself together. It was absurd, I thought. The Welsh rare-bit I had eaten had disagreed with me. I had been in a nightmare. I made my way back to my state-room, and entered it with an effort. The whole place smelled of stagnant sea-water, as it had when I had waked on the previous evening. It required my utmost strength to go in, and grope among my things for a box of wax lights. As I lighted a railway reading lantern which I always carry in case I want to read after the lamps are out, I perceived that the porthole was again open, and a sort of creeping horror began to take possession

of me which I never felt before, nor wish to feel again. But I got a light and proceeded to examine the upper berth, expecting to find it drenched with sea-water.

But I was disappointed. The bed had been slept in, and the smell of the sea was strong; but the bedding was as dry as a bone. I fancied that Robert had not had the courage to make the bed after the accident of the previous night—it had all been a hideous dream. I drew the curtains back as far as I could and examined the place very carefully. It was perfectly dry. But the porthole was open again. With a sort of dull bewilderment of horror I closed it and screwed it down, and thrusting my heavy stick through the brass loop, wrenched it with all my might, till the thick metal began to bend under the pressure. Then I hooked my reading lantern into the red velvet at the head of the couch, and sat down to recover my senses if I could. I sat there all night, unable to think of rest—hardly able to think at all. But the porthole remained closed, and I did not believe it would now open again without the application of a considerable force.

The morning dawned at last, and I dressed myself slowly, thinking over all that had happened in the night. It was a beautiful day and I went on deck, glad to get out into the early, pure sunshine, and to smell the breeze from the blue water, so different from the noisome, stagnant odour of my state-room. Instinctively I turned aft, towards the surgeon's cabin. There he stood, with a pipe in his mouth, taking his morning airing precisely as on the preceding day.

'Good-morning,' said he quietly, but looking at me with evident curiosity.

'Doctor, you were quite right,' said I. 'There is something wrong about that place.'

'I thought you would change your mind,' he answered, rather triumphantly. 'You have had a bad night, eh? Shall I make you a pick-me-up? I have a capital recipe.'

'No, thanks,' I cried. 'But I would like to tell you what happened.'

I then tried to explain as clearly as possible precisely what had occurred, not omitting to state that I had been scared as I had never been scared in my whole life before. I dwelt particularly on the phenomenon of the porthole, which was a fact to which I could testify, even if the rest had been an illusion. I had closed it twice in the night, and the second time I had actually bent the brass in wrenching it with my stick. I believe I insisted a good deal on this point.

'You seem to think I am likely to doubt the story,' said the doctor, smiling at the detailed account of the state of the porthole. 'I do not doubt it in the least. I renew my invitation to you. Bring your traps here, and take half my cabin.'

'Come and take half of mine for one night,' I said. 'Help me to get at the bottom of this thing.'

'You will get to the bottom of something else if you try,' answered the doctor.

'What?' I asked.

'The bottom of the sea. I am going to leave this ship. It is not canny.'

'Then you will not help me to find out——'

'Not I,' said the doctor quickly. 'It is my business

to keep my wits about me—not to go fiddling about with ghosts and things.'

'Do you really believe it is a ghost?' I enquired, rather contemptuously. But as I spoke I remembered very well the horrible sensation of the supernatural which had got possession of me during the night. The doctor turned sharply on me.

'Have you any reasonable explanation of these things to offer?' he asked. 'No; you have not. Well, you say you will find an explanation. I say that you won't, sir, simply because there is not any.'

'But, my dear sir,' I retorted, 'do you, a man of science, mean to tell me that such things cannot be explained?'

'I do,' he answered stoutly. 'And, if they could, I would not be concerned in the explanation.'

I did not care to spend another night alone in the state-room, and yet I was obstinately determined to get at the root of the disturbances. I do not believe there are many men who would have slept there alone, after passing two such nights. But I made up my mind to try it, if I could not get any one to share a watch with me. The doctor was evidently not inclined for such an experiment. He said he was a surgeon, and that in case any accident occurred on board he must always be in readiness. He could not afford to have his nerves unsettled. Perhaps he was quite right, but I am inclined to think that his precaution was prompted by his inclination. On enquiry, he informed me that there was no one on board who would be likely to join me in my investigations, and after a little more conversation I left him. A little later I met the captain, and told him my story. I said that, if no

one would spend the night with me, I would ask leave to have the light burning all night, and would try it alone.

'Look here,' said he, 'I will tell you what I will do. I will share your watch myself, and we will see what happens. It is my belief that we can find out between us. There may be some fellow skulking on board, who steals a passage by frightening the passengers. It is just possible that there may be something queer in the carpentering of that berth.'

I suggested taking the ship's carpenter below and examining the place; but I was overjoyed at the captain's offer to spend the night with me. He accordingly sent for the workman and ordered him to do anything I required. We went below at once. I had all the bedding cleared out of the upper berth, and we examined the place thoroughly to see if there was a board loose anywhere, or a panel which could be opened or pushed aside. We tried the planks everywhere, tapped the flooring, unscrewed the fittings of the lower berth and took it to pieces—in short, there was not a square inch of the state-room which was not searched and tested. Everything was in perfect order, and we put everything back in its place. As we were finishing our work, Robert came to the door and looked in.

'Well, sir—find anything, sir?' he asked, with a ghastly grin.

'You were right about the porthole, Robert,' I said, and I gave him the promised sovereign. The carpenter did his work silently and skilfully, following my directions. When he had done he spoke.

'I'm a plain man, sir,' he said. 'But it's my belief you had better just turn out your things, and let

me run half a dozen four-inch screws through the door of this cabin. There's no good never came o' this cabin yet, sir, and that's all about it. There's been four lives lost out o' here to my own remembrance, and that in four trips. Better give it up, sir—better give it up!

'I will try it for one night more,' I said.

'Better give it up, sir—better give it up! It's a precious bad job,' repeated the workman, putting his tools in his bag and leaving the cabin.

But my spirits had risen considerably at the prospect of having the captain's company, and I made up my mind not to be prevented from going to the end of the strange business. I abstained from Welsh rare-bits and grog that evening, and did not even join in the customary game of whist. I wanted to be quite sure of my nerves, and my vanity made me anxious to make a good figure in the captain's eyes.

IV

The captain was one of those splendidly tough and cheerful specimens of seafaring humanity whose combined courage, hardihood, and calmness in difficulty leads them naturally into high positions of trust. He was not the man to be led away by an idle tale, and the mere fact that he was willing to join me in the investigation was proof that he thought there was something seriously wrong, which could not be accounted for on ordinary theories, nor laughed down as a common superstition. To some extent, too, his reputation was at stake, as well as the reputation of the ship. It is no light thing to lose passengers overboard, and he knew it.

About ten o'clock that evening, as I was smoking a last cigar, he came up to me, and drew me aside from the beat of the other passengers who were patrolling the deck in the warm darkness.

'This is a serious matter, Mr. Brisbane,' he said. 'We must make up our minds either way—to be disappointed or to have a pretty rough time of it. You see I cannot afford to laugh at the affair, and I will ask you to sign your name to a statement of whatever occurs. If nothing happens to-night we will try it again to-morrow and next day. Are you ready?'

So we went below, and entered the state-room. As we went in I could see Robert the steward, who stood a little further down the passage, watching us, with his usual grin, as though certain that something dreadful was about to happen. The captain closed the door behind us and bolted it.

'Supposing we put your portmanteau before the door,' he suggested. 'One of us can sit on it. Nothing can get out then. Is the port screwed down?'

I found it as I had left it in the morning. Indeed, without using a lever, as I had done, no one could have opened it. I drew back the curtains of the upper berth so that I could see well into it. By the captain's advice I lighted my reading lantern, and placed it so that it shone upon the white sheets above. He insisted upon sitting on the portmanteau, declaring that he wished to be able to swear that he had sat before the door.

Then he requested me to search the state-room thoroughly, an operation very soon accomplished, as it consisted merely in looking beneath the lower

berth and under the couch below the porthole. The spaces were quite empty.

'It is impossible for any human being to get in,' I said, 'or for any human being to open the port.'

'Very good,' said the captain calmly. 'If we see anything now, it must be either imagination or something supernatural.'

I sat down on the edge of the lower berth.

'The first time it happened,' said the captain, crossing his legs and leaning back against the door, 'was in March. The passenger who slept here, in the upper berth, turned out to have been a lunatic—at all events, he was known to have been a little touched, and he had taken his passage without the knowledge of his friends. He rushed out in the middle of the night, and threw himself overboard, before the officer who had the watch could stop him. We stopped and lowered a boat; it was a quiet night, just before that heavy weather came on; but we could not find him. Of course his suicide was afterwards accounted for on the ground of his insanity.'

'I suppose that often happens?' I remarked, rather absently.

'Not often—no,' said the captain; 'never before in my experience, though I have heard of it happen in on board of other ships. Well, as I was saying, that occurred in March. On the very next trip—What are you looking at?' he asked, stopping suddenly in his narration.

I believe I gave no answer. My eyes were riveted upon the porthole. It seemed to me that the brass loop-nut was beginning to turn very slowly upon the screw—so slowly, however, that I was not sure

it moved at all. I watched it intently, fixing its position in my mind, and trying to ascertain whether it changed. Seeing where I was looking, the captain looked, too.

'It moves!' he exclaimed, in a tone of conviction. 'No, it does not,' he added, after a minute.

'If it were the jarring of the screw,' said I, 'it would have opened during the day; but I found it this evening jammed tight as I left it this morning.'

I rose and tried the nut. It was certainly loosened, for by an effort I could move it with my hands.

'The queer thing,' said the captain, 'is that the second man who was lost is supposed to have got through that very port. We had a terrible time over it. It was in the middle of the night, and the weather was very heavy; there was an alarm that one of the ports was open and the sea running in. I came below and found everything flooded, the water pouring in every time she rolled, and the whole port swinging from the top bolts—not the porthole in the middle. Well, we managed to shut it, but the water did some damage. Ever since that the place smells of sea-water from time to time. We supposed the passenger had thrown himself out, though the Lord only knows how he did it. The steward kept telling me that he cannot keep anything shut here. Upon my word—I can smell it now, cannot you?' he enquired, sniffing the air suspiciously.

'Yes—distinctly,' I said, and I shuddered as that same odour of stagnant sea-water grew stronger in the cabin. 'Now, to smell like this, the place must be damp,' I continued, 'and yet when I

examined it with the carpenter this morning everything was perfectly dry. It is most extraordinary—hallo!

My reading lantern, which had been placed in the upper berth, was suddenly extinguished. There was still a good deal of light from the pane of ground glass near the door, behind which loomed the regulation lamp. The ship rolled heavily, and the curtain of the upper berth swung far out into the state-room and back again. I rose quickly from my seat on the edge of the bed, and the captain at the same moment started to his feet with a loud cry of surprise. I had turned with the intention of taking down the lantern to examine it, when I heard his exclamation, and immediately afterwards his call for help. I sprang towards him. He was wrestling with all his might with the brass loop of the port. It seemed to turn against his hands in spite of all his efforts. I caught up my cane, a heavy oak stick I always used to carry, and thrust it through the ring and bore on it with all my strength. But the strong wood snapped suddenly and I fell upon the couch. When I rose again the port was wide open, and the captain was standing with his back against the door, pale to the lips.

'There is something in that berth!' he cried, in a strange voice, his eyes almost starting from his head. 'Hold the door, while I look—it shall not escape us, whatever it is!'

But instead of taking his place, I sprang upon the lower bed, and seized something which lay in the upper berth.

It was something ghostly, horrible beyond words, and it moved in my grip. It was like the body of a

man long drowned, and yet it moved, and had the strength of ten men living; but I gripped it with all my might—the slippery, oozy, horrible thing—the dead white eyes seemed to stare at me out of the dusk; the putrid odour of rank sea-water was about it, and its shiny hair hung in foul wet curls over its dead face. I wrestled with the dead thing; it thrust itself upon me and forced me back and nearly broke my arms; it wound its corpse's arms about my neck, the living death, and overpowered me, so that I, at last, cried aloud and fell, and left my hold.

As I fell the thing sprang across me, and seemed to throw itself upon the captain. When I last saw him on his feet his face was white and his lips set. It seemed to me that he struck a violent blow at the dead being, and then he, too, fell forward upon his face, with an inarticulate cry of horror.

The thing paused an instant, seeming to hover over his prostrate body, and I could have screamed again for very fright, but I had no voice left. The thing vanished suddenly, and it seemed to my disturbed senses that it made its exit through the open port, though how that was possible, considering the smallness of the aperture, is more than any one can tell. I lay a long time upon the floor, and the captain lay beside me. At last I partially recovered my senses and moved, and instantly I knew that my arm was broken—the small bone of the left forearm near the wrist.

I got upon my feet somehow, and with my remaining hand I tried to raise the captain. He groaned and moved, and at last came to himself. He was not hurt, but he seemed badly stunned.

Well, do you want to hear any more? There is

nothing more. That is the end of my story. The carpenter carried out his scheme of running half a dozen four-inch screws through the door of 105; and if ever you take a passage in the *Kamtschatka*, you may ask for a berth in that state-room. You will be told that it is engaged—yes—it is engaged by that dead thing.

I finished the trip in the surgeon's cabin. He doctored my broken arm, and advised me not to 'fiddle about with ghosts and things' any more. The captain was very silent, and never sailed again in that ship, though it is still running. And I will not sail in her either. It was a very disagreeable experience, and I was very badly frightened, which is a thing I do not like. That is all. That is how I saw a ghost—if it was a ghost. It was dead, anyhow.

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THE NOVEL OF THE WHITE POWDER

By ARTHUR MACHEN

MY name is Leicester; my father, Major-General Wyn Leicester, a distinguished officer of artillery, succumbed five years ago to a complicated liver complaint acquired in the deadly climate of India. A year later my only brother, Francis, came home after an exceptionally brilliant career at the University, and settled down with the resolution of a hermit to master what has been well called the great legend of the law. He was a man who seemed to live in utter indifference to everything that is called pleasure; and though he was handsomer than most men, and could talk as merrily and wittily as if he were a mere vagabond, he avoided society, and shut himself up in a large room at the top of the house to make himself a lawyer. Ten hours a day of hard reading was at first his allotted portion; from the first light in the east to the late afternoon he remained shut up with his books, taking a hasty half-hour's lunch with me as if he grudged the wasting of the moments, and going out for a short walk when it began to grow dusk. I thought that such relentless application must be injurious, and tried to cajole him from the crabbed text-books, but his ardour seemed to grow rather than diminish, and his daily tale of hours increased. I spoke to him seriously, suggesting some occasional relaxation, if it were but an idle afternoon with a harmless novel; but he laughed; and said that he

read about feudal tenures when he felt in need of amusement, and scoffed at the notion of theatres, or a month's fresh air. I confessed that he looked well, and seemed not to suffer from his labours, but I knew that such unnatural toil would take revenge at last, and I was not mistaken. A look of anxiety began to lurk about his eyes, and he seemed languid, and at last he avowed that he was no longer in perfect health; he was troubled, he said, with a sensation of dizziness, and awoke now and then of nights from fearful dreams, terrified and cold with icy sweats. 'I am taking care of myself,' he said, 'so you must not trouble; I passed the whole of yesterday afternoon in idleness, leaning back in that comfortable chair you gave me, and scribbling nonsense on a sheet of paper. No, no; I will not overdo my work; I shall be well enough in a week or two, depend upon it.'

Yet in spite of his assurances I could see that he grew no better, but rather worse; he would enter the drawing-room with a face all miserably wrinkled and despondent, and endeavour to look gaily when my eyes fell on him, and I thought such symptoms of evil omen, and was frightened sometimes at the nervous irritation of his movements, and at glances which I could not decipher. Much against his will, I prevailed on him to have medical advice, and with an ill grace he called in our old doctor.

Dr. Haberdern cheered me after examination of his patient.

'There is nothing really much amiss,' he said to me. 'No doubt he reads too hard, and eats hastily, and then goes back again to his books in too great a hurry, and the natural consequence is some

digestive trouble and a little mischief in the nervous system. But I think—I do indeed, Miss Leicester—that we shall be able to set this all right. I have written him a prescription which ought to do great things. So you have no cause for anxiety.’

My brother insisted on having the prescription made up by a chemist in the neighbourhood; it was an odd, old-fashioned shop, devoid of the studied coquetry and calculated glitter that make so gay a show on the counters and shelves of the modern apothecary; but Francis liked the old chemist, and believed in the scrupulous purity of his drugs. The medicine was sent in due course, and I saw that my brother took it regularly after lunch and dinner. It was an innocent-looking white powder, of which a little was dissolved in a glass of cold water; I stirred it in, and it seemed to disappear, leaving the water clear and colourless. At first Francis seemed to benefit greatly; the weariness vanished from his face, and he became more cheerful than he had ever been since the time when he left school; he talked gaily of reforming himself, and avowed to me that he had wasted his time.

‘I have given too many hours to law,’ he said, laughing; ‘I think you have saved me in the nick of time. Come, I shall be Lord Chancellor yet, but I must not forget life. You and I will have a holiday together before long; we will go to Paris and enjoy ourselves, and keep away from the *Bibliothèque Nationale*.’

I confessed myself delighted with the prospect.

‘When shall we go?’ I said. ‘I can start the day after to-morrow if you like.’

‘Ah! that is perhaps a little too soon; after all, I

do not know London yet, and I suppose a man ought to give the pleasures of his own country the first choice. But we will go off together in a week or two, so try and furbish up your French. I only know law French myself, and I am afraid that wouldn't do.'

We were just finishing the dinner, and he quaffed off his medicine with a parade of carousal as if it had been wine from some choicest bin.

'Has it any particular taste?' I said.

'No; I should not know I was not drinking water,' and he got up from his chair and began to pace up and down the room as if he were undecided as to what he should do next.

'Shall we have coffee in the drawing-room?' I said; 'or would you like to smoke?'

'No, I think I will take a turn; it seems a pleasant evening. Look at the afterglow; why, it is as if a great city were burning in flames, and down there between the dark houses it is raining blood fast, fast. Yes, I will go out; I may be in soon, but I shall take my key; so good night, dear, if I don't see you again.'

The door slammed behind him, and I saw him walk lightly down the street, swinging his malacca cane, and I felt grateful to Dr. Haberdon for such an improvement.

I believe my brother came home very late that night, but he was in a merry mood the next morning.

'I walked on without thinking where I was going,' he said, 'enjoying the freshness of the air, and livened by the crowds as I reached more frequented quarters. And then I met an old college friend,

Orford, in the press of the pavement, and then—well, we enjoyed ourselves. I have felt what it is to be young and a man; I find I have blood in my veins, as other men have. I made an appointment with Orford for to-night; there will be a little party of us at the restaurant. Yes; I shall enjoy myself for a week or two, and hear the chimes at midnight, and then we will go for our little trip together.'

Such was the transmutation of my brother's character that in a few days he became a lover of pleasure, a careless and merry idler of western pavements, a hunter out of snug restaurants, and a fine critic of fantastic dancing; he grew fat before my eyes, and said no more of Paris, for he had clearly found his paradise in London. I rejoiced, and yet wondered a little; for there was, I thought, something in his gaiety that indefinitely displeased me, though I could not have defined my feeling. But by degrees there came a change; he returned still in the cold hours of the morning, but I heard no more about his pleasures, and one morning as we sat at breakfast together I looked suddenly into his eyes and saw a stranger before me.

'O Francis!' I cried. 'O Francis, Francis, what have you done?' and rending sobs cut the words short. I went weeping out of the room; for though I knew nothing, yet I knew all, and by some odd play of thought I remembered the evening when he first went abroad to prove his manhood, and the picture of the sunset sky glowed before me; the clouds like a city in burning flames, and the rain of blood. Yet I did battle with such thoughts, resolving that perhaps, after all, no great harm had been done, and in the evening at dinner I re-

solved to press him to fix a day for our holiday in Paris. We had talked easily enough, and my brother had just taken his medicine, which he had continued all the while. I was about to begin my topic, when the words forming in my mind vanished, and I wondered for a second why icy and intolerable weight oppressed my heart and suffocated me as with the unutterable horror of the coffin-lid nailed down on the living.

We had dined without candles; the room had slowly grown from twilight to gloom, and the walls and corners were indistinct in the shadow. But from where I sat I looked out into the street; and as I thought of what I would say to Francis, the sky began to flush and shine, as it had done on a well-remembered evening, and in the gap between two dark masses that were houses an awful pageantry of flame appeared—lurid whorls of writhed cloud, and utter depths burning, grey masses like the fume blown from a smoking city, and an evil glory blazing far above shot with tongues of more ardent fire, and below as if there were a deep pool of blood. I looked down to where my brother sat facing me, and the words were shaped on my lips, when I saw his hand resting on the table. Between the thumb and forefinger of the closed hand there was a mark, a small patch about the size of a sixpence, and somewhat of the colour of a bad bruise. Yet, by some sense I cannot define, I knew that what I saw was no bruise at all; oh! if human flesh could burn with flame, and if flame could be black as pitch, such was that before me. Without thought or fashioning of words grey horror shaped within me at the sight, and in an inner cell it was known to

be a brand. For a moment the stained sky became dark as midnight, and when the light returned to me I was alone in the silent room, and soon after I heard my brother go out.

Late as it was, I put on my bonnet and went to Dr. Haberdon, and in his great consulting room, ill lighted by a candle which the doctor brought in with him, with stammering lips, and a voice that would break in spite of my resolve, I told him all, from the day on which my brother began to take the medicine down to the dreadful thing I had seen scarcely half an hour before.

When I had done, the doctor looked at me for a minute with an expression of great pity on his face.

'My dear Miss Leicester,' he said, 'you have evidently been anxious about your brother; you have been worrying over him, I am sure. Come, now, is it not so?'

'I have certainly been anxious,' I said. 'For the last week or two I have not felt at ease.'

'Quite so; you know, of course, what a queer thing the brain is?'

'I understand what you mean; but I was not deceived. I saw what I have told you with my own eyes.'

'Yes, yes, of course. But your eyes had been staring at that very curious sunset we had to-night. That is the only explanation. You will see it in the proper light to-morrow, I am sure. But, remember, I am always ready to give any help that is in my power; do not scruple to come to me, or to send for me if you are in any distress.'

I went away but little comforted, all confusion and terror and sorrow, not knowing where to turn.

When my brother and I met the next day, I looked quickly at him, and noticed, with a sickening at heart, that the right hand, the hand on which I had clearly seen the patch as of a black fire, was wrapped up with a handkerchief.

'What is the matter with your hand, Francis?' I said in a steady voice.

'Nothing of consequence. I cut a finger last night, and it bled rather awkwardly. So I did it up roughly to the best of my ability.'

'I will do it neatly for you, if you like.'

'No, thank you, dear; this will answer very well. Suppose we have breakfast; I am quite hungry.'

We sat down, and I watched him. He scarcely ate or drank at all, but tossed his meat to the dog when he thought my eyes were turned away; there was a look in his eyes that I had never yet seen, and the thought flashed across my mind that it was a look that was scarcely human. I was firmly convinced that awful and incredible as was the thing I had seen the night before, yet it was no illusion, no glamour of bewildered sense, and in the course of the morning I went again to the doctor's house.

He shook his head with an air puzzled and incredulous, and seemed to reflect for a few minutes.

'And you say he still keeps up the medicine? But why? As I understand, all the symptoms he complained of have disappeared long ago; why should he go on taking the stuff when he is quite well. And, by the by, where did he get it made up? At Sayce's? I never send any one there; the old man is getting careless. Suppose you come with me to the chemist's; I should like to have some talk with him.'

We walked together to the shop; old Sayce knew Dr. Haberdén, and was quite ready to give any information.

'You have been sending that in to Mr. Leicester for some weeks I think on my prescription,' said the doctor, giving the old man a pencilled scrap of paper.

The chemist put on his great spectacles with trembling uncertainty, and held up the paper with a shaking hand.

'Oh yes,' he said, 'I have very little of it left; it is rather an uncommon drug, and I have had it in stock some time. I must get in some more, if Mr. Leicester goes on with it.'

'Kindly let me have a look at the stuff,' said Haberdén, and the chemist gave him a glass bottle. He took out the stopper and smelt the contents, and looked strangely at the old man.

'Where did you get this?' he said, 'and what is it? For one thing, Mr. Sayce, it is not what I prescribed. Yes, yes, I see the label is right enough, but I tell you this is not the drug.'

'I have had it a long time,' said the old man in feeble terror; 'I got it from Burbage's in the usual way. It is not prescribed often, and I have had it on the shelf for some years. You see there is very little left.'

'You had better give it to me,' said Haberdén. 'I am afraid something wrong has happened.'

We went out of the shop in silence, the doctor carrying the bottle neatly wrapped in paper under his arm.

'Dr. Haberdén,' I said when we had walked a little way—'Dr. Haberdén.'

'Yes,' he said, looking at me gloomily enough.

'I should like you to tell me what my brother has been taking twice a day for the last month or so.'

'Frankly, Miss Leicester, I don't know. We will speak of this when we get to my house.'

We walked on quickly without another word till we reached Dr. Haberdén's. He asked me to sit down, and began pacing up and down the room, his face clouded over, as I could see, with no common fears.

'Well,' he said at length, 'this is all very strange; it is only natural that you should feel alarmed, and I must confess that my mind is far from easy. We will put aside, if you please, what you told me last night and this morning, but the fact remains that for the last few weeks Mr. Leicester has been impregnating his system with a drug which is completely unknown to me. I tell you, it is not what I ordered; and what that stuff in the bottle really is remains to be seen.'

He undid the wrapper, and cautiously tilted a few grains of the white powder on to a piece of paper, and peered curiously at it.

'Yes,' he said, 'it is like the sulphate of quinine, as you say; it is flaky. But smell it.'

He held the bottle to me, and I bent over it. It was a strange, sickly smell, vaporous and overpowering, like some strong anaesthetic.

'I shall have it analysed,' said Haberdén; 'I have a friend who has devoted his whole life to chemistry as a science. Then we shall have something to go upon. No, no; say no more about that other matter; I cannot listen to that; and take my advice and think no more about it yourself.'

That evening my brother did not go out as usual after dinner.

'I have had my fling,' he said with a queer laugh, 'and I must go back to my old ways. A little law will be quite a relaxation after so sharp a dose of pleasure,' and he grinned to himself, and soon after went up to his room. His hand was still all bandaged.

Dr. Haberdern called a few days later.

'I have no special news to give you,' he said. 'Chambers is out of town, so I know no more about that stuff than you do. But I should like to see Mr. Leicester if he is in.'

'He is in his room,' I said; 'I will tell him you are here.'

'No, no, I will go up to him; we will have a little quiet talk together. I dare say that we have made a good deal of fuss about very little; for, after all, whatever the white powder may be, it seems to have done him good.'

The doctor went upstairs, and standing in the hall I heard his knock, and the opening and shutting of the door; and then I waited in the silent house for an hour, and the stillness grew more and more intense as the hands of the clock crept round. Then there sounded from above the noise of a door shut sharply, and the doctor was coming down the stairs. His footsteps crossed the hall, and there was a pause at the door; I drew a long, sick breath with difficulty, and saw my face white in a little mirror, and he came in and stood at the door. There was an unutterable horror shining in his eyes; he steadied himself by holding the back of a chair with one hand, his lower lip trembled like a horse's, and he

gulped and stammered unintelligible sounds before he spoke.

'I have seen that man,' he began in a dry whisper. 'I have been sitting in his presence for the last hour. My God! And I am alive and in my senses! I, who have dealt with death all my life, and have dabbled with the melting ruins of the earthly tabernacle. But not this, oh! not this,' and he covered his face with his hands as if to shut out the sight of something before him.

'Do not send for me again, Miss Leicester,' he said with more composure. 'I can do nothing in this house. Good-bye.'

As I watched him totter down the steps, and along the pavement towards his house, it seemed to me that he had aged by ten years since the morning.

My brother remained in his room. He called out to me in a voice I hardly recognized that he was very busy, and would like his meals brought to his door and left there, and I gave the order to the servants. From that day it seemed as if the arbitrary conception we call time had been annihilated for me; I lived in an ever-present sense of horror, going through the routine of the house mechanically, and only speaking a few necessary words to the servants. Now and then I went out and paced the streets for an hour or two and came home again; but whether I were without or within, my spirit delayed before the closed door of the upper room, and, shuddering, waited for it to open. I have said that I scarcely reckoned time; but I suppose it must have been a fortnight after Dr. Haberdens's visit that I came home from my stroll

a little refreshed and lightened. The air was sweet and pleasant, and the hazy form of green leaves, floating cloudlike in the square, and the smell of blossoms, had charmed my senses, and I felt happier and walked more briskly. As I delayed a moment at the verge of the pavement, waiting for a van to pass by before crossing over to the house, I happened to look up at the windows, and instantly there was the rush and swirl of deep cold waters in my ears, my heart leapt up, and fell down, down as into a deep hollow, and I was amazed with a dread and terror without form or shape. I stretched out a hand blindly through folds of thick darkness, from the black and shadowy valley, and held myself from falling, while the stones beneath my feet rocked and swayed and tilted, and the sense of solid things seemed to sink away from under me. I had glanced up at the window of my brother's study, and at that moment the blind was drawn aside, and something that had life stared out into the world. Nay, I cannot say I saw a face or any human likeness; a living thing, two eyes of burning flame glared at me, and they were in the midst of something as formless as my fear, the symbol and presence of all evil and all hideous corruption. I stood shuddering and quaking as with the grip of ague, sick with unspeakable agonies of fear and loathing, and for five minutes I could not summon force or motion to my limbs. When I was within the door, I ran up the stairs to my brother's room, and knocked.

'Francis, Francis,' I cried, 'for heaven's sake, answer me. What is the horrible thing in your room? Cast it out, Francis; cast it from you.'

I heard a noise as of feet shuffling slowly and awkwardly, and a choking, gurgling sound, as if some one was struggling to find utterance, and then the noise of a voice, broken and stifled, and words that I could scarcely understand.

'There is nothing here,' the voice said. 'Pray do not disturb me. I am not very well to-day.'

I turned away, horrified, and yet helpless. I could do nothing, and I wondered why Francis had lied to me, for I had seen the appearance beyond the glass too plainly to be deceived, though it was but the sight of a moment. And I sat still, conscious that there had been something else, something I had seen in the first flash of terror, before those burning eyes had looked at me. Suddenly I remembered; as I lifted my face the blind was being drawn back, and I had had an instant's glance of the thing that was moving it, and in my recollection I knew that a hideous image was engraved for ever on my brain. It was not a hand; there were no fingers that held the blind, but a black stump pushed it aside, the mouldering outline and the clumsy movement as of a beast's paw had glowed into my senses before the darkling waves of terror had overwhelmed me as I went down quick into the pit. My mind was aghast at the thought of this, and of the awful presence that dwelt with my brother in his room; I went to his door and cried to him again, but no answer came. That night one of the servants came up to me and told me in a whisper that for three days food had been regularly placed at the door and left untouched; the maid had knocked, but had received no answer; she had heard the noise of shuffling feet that I had noticed.

Day after day went by, and still my brother's meals were brought to his door and left untouched; and though I knocked and called again and again, I could get no answer. The servants began to talk to me; it appeared they were as alarmed as I; the cook said that when my brother first shut himself up in his room she used to hear him come out at night and go about the house; and once, she said, the hall door had opened and closed again, but for several nights she had heard no sound. The climax came at last; it was in the dusk of the evening, and I was sitting in the darkening dreary room when a terrible shriek jarred and rang harshly out of the silence, and I heard a frightened scurry of feet dashing down the stairs. I waited, and the servant-maid staggered into the room and faced me, white and trembling.

'O Miss Helen!' she whispered; 'oh! for the Lord's sake, Miss Helen, what has happened? Look at my hand, miss; look at that hand!'

I drew her to the window, and saw there was a black wet stain upon her hand.

'I do not understand you,' I said. 'Will you explain to me?'

'I was doing your room just now,' she began. 'I was turning down the bed-clothes, and all of a sudden there was something fell upon my hand, wet, and I looked up, and the ceiling was black and dripping on me.'

I looked hard at her and bit my lip.

'Come with me,' I said. 'Bring your candle with you.'

The room I slept in was beneath my brother's, and as I went in I felt I was trembling. I looked up

at the ceiling, and saw a patch, all black and wet, and a dew of black drops upon it, and a pool of horrible liquor soaking into the white bed-clothes.

I ran upstairs and knocked loudly.

'O Francis, Francis, my dear brother,' I cried, 'what has happened to you?'

And I listened. There was a sound of choking, and a noise like water bubbling and regurgitating but nothing else, and I called louder, but no answer came.

In spite of what Dr. Haberdon had said, I went to him; with tears streaming down my cheeks I told him of all that had happened, and he listened to me with a face set hard and grim.

'For your father's sake,' he said at last, 'I will go with you, though I can do nothing.'

We went out together; the streets were dark and silent, and heavy with heat and a drought of many weeks. I saw the doctor's face white under the gas-lamps, and when we reached the house his hand was shaking.

We did not hesitate, but went upstairs directly. I held the lamp, and he called out in a loud, determined voice—

'Mr. Leicester, do you hear me? I insist on seeing you. Answer me at once.'

There was no answer, but we both heard that choking noise I have mentioned.

'Mr. Leicester, I am waiting for you. Open the door this instant, or I shall break it down.' And he called a third time in a voice that rang and echoed from the walls—

'Mr. Leicester! For the last time I order you to open the door.'

'Ah!' he said, after a pause of heavy silence, 'we are wasting time here. Will you be so kind as to get me a poker, or something of the kind.'

I ran into a little room at the back where odd articles were kept, and found a heavy adze-like tool that I thought might serve the doctor's purpose.

'Very good,' he said, 'that will do, I dare say. I give you notice, Mr. Leicester,' he cried loudly at the keyhole, 'that I am now about to break into your room.'

Then I heard the wrench of the adze, and the woodwork split and cracked under it; with a loud crash the door suddenly burst open, and for a moment we started back aghast at a fearful screaming cry, no human voice, but as the roar of a monster, that burst forth inarticulate and struck at us out of the darkness.

'Hold the lamp,' said the doctor, and we went in and glanced quickly round the room.

'There it is,' said Dr. Haberden, drawing a quick breath; 'look, in that corner.'

I looked, and a pang of horror seized my heart as with a white-hot iron. There upon the floor was a dark and putrid mass, seething with corruption and hideous rottenness, neither liquid nor solid, but melting and changing before our eyes, and bubbling with unctuous oily bubbles like boiling pitch. And out of the midst of it shone two burning points like eyes, and I saw a writhing and stirring as of limbs, and something moved and lifted up that might have been an arm. The doctor took a step forward, raised the iron bar and struck at the burning points; he drove in the weapon, and

struck again and again in a fury of loathing. At last the thing was quiet.

* * * * *

A week or two later, when I had to some extent recovered from the terrible shock, Dr. Haberdén came to see me.

'I have sold my practice,' he began, 'and to-morrow I am sailing on a long voyage. I do not know whether I shall ever return to England; in all probability I shall buy a little land in California, and settle there for the remainder of my life. I have brought you this packet, which you may open and read when you feel able to do so. It contains the report of Dr. Chambers on what I submitted to him. Good-bye, Miss Leicester, good-bye.'

When he was gone I opened the envelope; I could not wait, and proceeded to read the paper within.

'My dear Haberdén,' the letter began, 'I have delayed inexcusably in answering your questions as to the white substance you sent me. To tell you the truth, I have hesitated for some time as to what course I should adopt, for there is a bigotry and an orthodox standard in physical science as in theology, and I knew that if I told you the truth I should offend rooted prejudices which I once held dear myself. However, I have determined to be plain with you, and first I must enter into a short personal explanation.

'You have known me, Haberdén, for many years as a scientific man; you and I have often talked of our profession together, and discussed the hopeless gulf that opens before the feet of those who think to attain to truth by any means whatsoever except

the beaten way of experiment and observation in the sphere of material things. I remember the scorn with which you have spoken to me of men of science who have dabbled a little in the unseen, and have timidly hinted that perhaps the senses are not, after all, the eternal, impenetrable bounds of all knowledge, the everlasting walls beyond which no human being has ever passed. We have laughed together heartily, and I think justly, at the "occult" follies of the day, disguised under various names—the mesmerisms, spiritualisms, materialisations, theosophies, all the rabble rant of imposture, with their machinery of poor tricks and feeble conjuring, the true back-parlour magic of shabby London streets. Yet, in spite of what I have said, I must confess to you that I am no materialist, taking the word of course in its usual signification. It is now many years since I have convinced myself, convinced myself a sceptic remember, that the old iron-bound theory is utterly and entirely false. Perhaps this confession will not wound you so sharply as it would have done twenty years ago; for I think you cannot have failed to notice that for some time hypotheses have been advanced by men of pure science which are nothing less than transcendental, and I suspect that most modern chemists and biologists of repute would not hesitate to subscribe the *dictum* of the old Schoolman, *Omnia exeunt in mysterium*, which means, I take it, that every branch of human knowledge if traced up to its source and final principles vanishes into mystery. I need not trouble you now with a detailed account of the painful steps which led me to my conclusions; a few simple experiments suggested

a doubt as to my then standpoint, and a train of thought that rose from circumstances comparatively trifling brought me far; my old conception of the universe has been swept away, and I stand in a world that seems as strange and awful to me as the endless waves of the ocean seen for the first time, shining, from a peak in Darien. Now I know that the walls of sense that seemed so impenetrable, that seemed to loom up above the heavens and to be founded below the depths, and to shut us in for evermore, are no such everlasting impassable barriers as we fancied, but thinnest and most airy veils that melt away before the seeker, and dissolve as the early mist of the morning about the brooks. I know that you never adopted the extreme materialistic position; you did not go about trying to prove a universal negative, for your logical sense withheld you from that crowning absurdity; but I am sure that you will find all that I am saying strange and repellent to your habits of thought. Yet, Haberdén, what I tell you is the truth, nay, to adopt our common language, the sole and scientific truth, verified by experience; and the universe is verily more splendid and more awful than we used to dream. The whole universe, my friend, is a tremendous sacrament; a mystic, ineffable force and energy, veiled by an outward form of matter; and man, and the sun and the other stars, and the flower of the grass, and the crystal in the test-tube, are each and every one as spiritual, as material, and subject to an inner working.

‘You will perhaps wonder, Haberdén, whence all this tends; but I think a little thought will make it clear. You will understand that from such a stand-

point the whole view of things is changed, and what we thought incredible and absurd may be possible enough. In short, we must look at legend and belief with other eyes, and be prepared to accept tales that had become mere fables. Indeed, this is no such great demand. After all, modern science will concede as much, in a hypocritical manner; you must not, it is true, believe in witchcraft, but you may credit hypnotism; ghosts are out of date, but there is a good deal to be said for the theory of telepathy. Give a superstition a Greek name, and believe in it, should almost be a proverb.

‘So much for my personal explanation. You sent me, Haberdern, a phial, stoppered and sealed, containing a small quantity of a flaky white powder, obtained from a chemist who has been dispensing it to one of your patients. I am not surprised to hear that this powder refused to yield any results to your analysis. It is a substance which was known to a few many hundred years ago, but which I never expected to have submitted to me from the shop of a modern apothecary. There seems no reason to doubt the truth of the man’s tale; he no doubt got, as he says, the rather uncommon salt you prescribed from the wholesale chemist’s; and it has probably remained on his shelf for twenty years, or perhaps longer. Here what we call chance and coincidence begin to work; during all these years the salt in the bottle was exposed to certain recurring variations of temperature, variations probably ranging from 40° to 80°. And, as it happens, such changes, recurring year after year at irregular intervals, and with varying degrees of intensity and duration, have constituted a process, and a

process so complicated and so delicate, that I question whether modern scientific apparatus directed with the utmost precision could produce the same result. The white powder you sent me is something very different from the drug you prescribed; it is the powder from which the wine of the Sabbath, the *Vinum Sabbati*, was prepared. No doubt you have read of the Witches' Sabbath, and have laughed at the tales which terrified our ancestors; the black cats, and the broomsticks, and dooms pronounced against some old woman's cow. Since I have known the truth I have often reflected that it is on the whole a happy thing that such burlesque as this is believed, for it serves to conceal much that it is better should not be known generally. However, if you care to read the appendix to Payne Knight's monograph, you will find that the true Sabbath was something very different, though the writer has very nicely refrained from printing all he knew. The secrets of the true Sabbath were the secrets of remote times surviving into the Middle Ages, secrets of an evil science which existed long before Aryan man entered Europe. Men and women, seduced from their homes on specious pretences, were met by beings well qualified to assume, as they did assume, the part of devils, and taken by their guides to some desolate and lonely place, known to the initiate by long tradition, and unknown to all else. Perhaps it was a cave in some bare and wind-swept hill, perhaps some inmost recess of a great forest, and there the Sabbath was held. There, in the blackest hour of night, the *Vinum Sabbati* was prepared, and this evil graal was poured forth and offered to the

neophytes, and they partook of an infernal sacrament; *sumentes calicem principis inferorum*, as an old author well expresses it. And suddenly, each one that had drunk found himself attended by a companion, a shape of glamour and unearthly allurements, beckoning him apart, to share in joys more exquisite, more piercing than the thrill of any dream, to the consummation of the marriage of the Sabbath. It is hard to write of such things as these, and chiefly because that shape that allured such loveliness was no hallucination, but, awful as it is to express, the man himself. By the power of that Sabbath wine, a few grains of white powder thrown into a glass of water, the house of life was riven asunder and the human trinity dissolved, and the worm which never dies, that which lies sleeping within us all, was made tangible and an external thing, and clothed with a garment of flesh. And then, in the hour of midnight, the primal fall was repeated and represented, and the awful thing veiled in the mythos of the Tree in the Garden was done anew. Such was the *nuptiæ Sabbati*.

‘I prefer to say no more; you, Haberdens, know as well as I do that the most trivial laws of life are not to be broken with impunity; and for so terrible an act as this, in which the very inmost place of the temple was broken open and defiled, a terrible vengeance followed. What began with corruption ended also with corruption.’

Underneath is the following in Dr. Haberdens’s writing:-

‘The whole of the above is unfortunately strictly and entirely true. Your brother confessed all to

me on that morning when I saw him in his room. My attention was first attracted to the bandaged hand, and I forced him to show it to me. What I saw made me, a medical man of many years standing, grow sick with loathing, and the story I was forced to listen to was infinitely more frightful than I could have believed possible. It has tempted me to doubt the Eternal Goodness which can permit nature to offer such hideous possibilities; and if you had not with your own eyes seen the end, I should have said to you—disbelieve it all. I have not, I think, many more weeks to live, but you are young, and may forget all this.

‘JOSEPH HABERDEN, M.D.’

In the course of two or three months I heard that Dr. Haberdén had died at sea shortly after the ship left England.

THE DOOR IN THE WALL

By H. G. WELLS

I

ONE confidential evening, not three months ago, Lionel Wallace told me this story of the Door in the Wall. And at the time I thought that so far as he was concerned it was a true story.

He told it me with such a direct simplicity of conviction that I could not do otherwise than believe in him. But in the morning, in my own flat, I woke to a different atmosphere, and as I lay in bed and recalled the things he had told me, stripped of the glamour of his earnest slow voice, denuded of the focused, shaded table light, the shadowy atmosphere that wrapped about him and me, and the pleasant bright things, the dessert and glasses and napery of the dinner we had shared, making them for the time a bright little world quite cut off from everyday realities, I saw it all as frankly incredible. 'He was mystifying!' I said, and then: 'How well he did it! . . . It isn't quite the thing I should have expected him, of all people, to do well.'

Afterwards as I sat up in bed and sipped my morning tea, I found myself trying to account for the flavour of reality that perplexed me in his impossible reminiscences, by supposing they did in some way suggest, present, convey—I hardly know which word to use—experiences it was otherwise impossible to tell.

Well, I don't resort to that explanation now. I have got over my intervening doubts. I believe

now, as I believed at the moment of telling, that Wallace did to the very best of his ability strip the truth of his secret for me. But whether he himself saw, or only thought he saw, whether he himself was the possessor of an inestimable privilege or the victim of a fantastic dream, I cannot pretend to guess. Even the facts of his death, which ended my doubts for ever, throw no light on that.

That much the reader must judge for himself.

I forget now what chance comment or criticism of mine moved so reticent a man to confide in me. He was, I think, defending himself against an imputation of slackness and unreliability I had made in relation to a great public movement, in which he had disappointed me. But he plunged suddenly. 'I have,' he said, 'a preoccupation——'

'I know,' he went on, after a pause, 'I have been negligent. The fact is—it isn't a case of ghosts or apparitions—but—it's an odd thing to tell of, Redmond—I am haunted. I am haunted by something—that rather takes the light out of things, that fills me with longings. . . .'

He paused, checked by that English shyness that so often overcomes us when we would speak of moving or grave or beautiful things. 'You were at Saint Æthelstan's all through,' he said, and for a moment that seemed to me quite irrelevant. 'Well,'—and he paused. Then very haltingly at first, but afterwards more easily, he began to tell of the thing that was hidden in his life, the haunting memory of a beauty and a happiness that filled his heart with insatiable longings, that made all the interests and spectacle of worldly life seem dull and tedious and vain to him.

Now that I have the clue to it, the thing seems written visibly in his face. I have a photograph in which that look of detachment has been caught and intensified. It reminds me of what a woman once said of him—a woman who had loved him greatly. ‘Suddenly,’ she said, ‘the interest goes out of him. He forgets you. He doesn’t care a rap for you—under his very nose. . . .’

Yet the interest was not always out of him, and when he was holding his attention to a thing Wallace could contrive to be an extremely successful man. His career, indeed, is set with successes. He left me behind him long ago: he soared up over my head, and cut a figure in the world that I couldn’t cut—anyhow. He was still a year short of forty, and they say now that he would have been in office and very probably in the new Cabinet if he had lived. At school he always beat me without effort—as it were by nature. We were at school together at Saint Æthelstan’s College in West Kensington for almost all our school-time. He came into the school as my co-equal, but he left far above me, in a blaze of scholarships and brilliant performance. Yet I think I made a fair average running. And it was at school I heard first of the ‘Door in the Wall’—that I was to hear of a second time only a month before his death.

To him at least the Door in the Wall was a real door, leading through a real wall to immortal realities. Of that I am now quite assured.

And it came into his life quite early, when he was a little fellow between five and six. I remember how, as he sat making his confession to me with a slow gravity, he reasoned and reckoned the date of

it. 'There was,' he said, 'a crimson Virginia creeper in it—all one bright uniform crimson, in a clear amber sunshine against a white wall. That came into the impression somehow, though I don't clearly remember how, and there were horse-chestnut leaves upon the clean pavement outside the green door. They were blotched yellow and green, you know, not brown nor dirty, so that they must have been new fallen. I take it that means October. I look out for horse-chestnut leaves every year and I ought to know.

'If I'm right in that, I was about five years and four months old.'

He was, he said, rather a precocious little boy—he learnt to talk at an abnormally early age, and he was so sane and 'old-fashioned,' as people say, that he was permitted an amount of initiative that most children scarcely attain by seven or eight. His mother died when he was two, and he was under the less vigilant and authoritative care of a nursery governess. His father was a stern, preoccupied lawyer, who gave him little attention, and expected great things of him. For all his brightness he found life a little gray and dull, I think. And one day he wandered.

He could not recall the particular neglect that enabled him to get away, nor the course he took among the West Kensington roads. All that had faded among the incurable blurs of memory. But the white wall and the green door stood out quite distinctly.

As his memory of that childish experience ran, he did at the very first sight of that door experience a peculiar emotion, an attraction, a desire to get to

the door and open it and walk in. And at the same time he had the clearest conviction that either it was unwise or it was wrong of him—he could not tell which—to yield to this attraction. He insisted upon it as a curious thing that he knew from the very beginning—unless memory has played him the queerest trick—that the door was unfastened, and that he could go in as he chose.

I seem to see the figure of that little boy, drawn and repelled. And it was very clear in his mind, too, though why it should be so was never explained, that his father would be very angry if he went in through that door.

Wallace described all these moments of hesitation to me with the utmost particularity. He went right past the door, and then, with his hands in his pockets and making an infantile attempt to whistle, strolled right along beyond the end of the wall. There he recalls a number of mean dirty shops, and particularly that of a plumber and decorator with a dusty disorder of earthenware pipes, sheet lead, ball taps, pattern books of wall paper, and tins of enamel. He stood pretending to examine these things, and *coveting*, passionately desiring, the green door.

Then, he said, he had a gust of emotion. He made a run for it, lest hesitation should grip him again; he went plump with outstretched hand through the green door and let it slam behind him. And so, in a trice, he came into the garden that has haunted all his life.

It was very difficult for Wallace to give me his full sense of that garden into which he came.

There was something in the very air of it that ex-

hilarated, that gave one a sense of lightness and good happening and well-being; there was something in the sight of it that made all its colour clean and perfect and subtly luminous. In the instant of coming into it one was exquisitely glad—as only in rare moments, and when one is young and joyful one can be glad in this world. And everything was beautiful there. . . .

Wallace mused before he went on telling me. 'You see,' he said, with the doubtful inflection of a man who pauses at incredible things, 'there were two great panthers there. . . . Yes, spotted panthers. And I was not afraid. There was a long wide path with marble-edged flower borders on either side, and these two huge velvety beasts were playing there with a ball. One looked up and came towards me, a little curious as it seemed. It came right up to me, rubbed its soft round ear very gently against the small hand I held out, and purred. It was, I tell you, an enchanted garden. I know. And the size? Oh! it stretched far and wide, this way and that. I believe there were hills far away. Heaven knows where West Kensington had suddenly got to. And somehow it was just like coming home.

'You know, in the very moment the door swung to behind me, I forgot the road with its fallen chestnut leaves, its cabs and tradesmen's carts, I forgot the sort of gravitational pull back to the discipline and obedience of home, I forgot all hesitations and fear, forgot discretion, forgot all the intimate realities of this life. I became in a moment a very glad and wonder-happy little boy—in another world. It was a world with a different quality, a warmer, more

penetrating and mellower light, with a faint clear gladness in its air, and wisps of sun-touched cloud in the blueness of its sky. And before me ran this long wide path, invitingly, with weedless beds on either side, rich with untended flowers, and these two great panthers. I put my little hands fearlessly on their soft fur, and caressed their round ears and the sensitive corners under their ears, and played with them, and it was as though they welcomed me home. There was a keen sense of home-coming in my mind, and when presently a tall, fair girl appeared in the pathway, and came to meet me, smiling, and said 'Well?' to me, and lifted me, and kissed me, and put me down, and led me by the hand, there was no amazement, but only an impression of delightful rightness, of being reminded of happy things that had in some strange way been overlooked. There were broad red steps, I remember, that came into view between spikes of delphinium, and up these we went to a great avenue between very old and shady dark trees. All down this avenue, you know, between the red chapped stems, were marble seats of honour and statuary, and very tame and friendly white doves. . . .

'Along this cool avenue my girl-friend led me, looking down—I recall the pleasant lines, the finely-modelled chin of her sweet kind face—asking me questions in a soft, agreeable voice, and telling me things, pleasant things I know, though what they were I was never able to recall. . . . Presently a little Capuchin monkey, very clean, with a fur of ruddy brown and kindly hazel eyes, came down a tree to us and ran beside me, looking up at me and grin-

ning, and presently leapt to my shoulder. So we two went on our way in great happiness.'

He paused.

'Go on,' I said.

'I remember little things. We passed an old man musing among laurels, I remember, and a place gay with paroquets, and came through a broad shaded colonnade to a spacious cool palace, full of pleasant fountains, full of beautiful things, full of the quality and promise of heart's desire. And there were many things and many people, some that still seem to stand out clearly and some that are a little vague; but all these people were beautiful and kind. In some way—I don't know how—it was conveyed to me that they all were kind to me, glad to have me there, and filling me with gladness by their gestures, by the touch of their hands, by the welcome and love in their eyes. Yes——'

He mused for a while. 'Playmates I found there. That was very much to me, because I was a lonely little boy. They played delightful games in a grass-covered court where there was a sun-dial set about with flowers. And as one played one loved. . . .

'But—it's odd—there's a gap in my memory. I don't remember the games we played. I never remembered. Afterwards, as a child, I spent long hours trying, even with tears, to recall the form of that happiness. I wanted to play it all over again—in my nursery—by myself. No! All I remember is the happiness and two dear playfellows who were most with me. . . . Then presently came a sombre dark woman, with a grave, pale face, and dreamy eyes, a sombre woman, wearing a soft long robe of pale purple, who carried a book, and beckoned and

took me aside with her into a gallery above a hall—though my playmates were loath to have me go, and ceased their game and stood watching as I was carried away. "Come back to us!" they cried. "Come back to us soon!" I looked up at her face, but she heeded them not at all. Her face was very gentle and grave. She took me to a seat in the gallery, and I stood beside her, ready to look at her book as she opened it upon her knee. The pages fell open. She pointed, and I looked, marvelling, for in the living pages of that book I saw myself; it was a story about myself, and in it were all the things that had happened to me since ever I was born. . . .

'It was wonderful to me, because the pages of that book were not pictures, you understand, but realities.'

Wallace paused gravely—looked at me doubtfully.

'Go on,' I said. 'I understand.'

'They were realities—yes, they must have been; people moved and things came and went in them; my dear mother, whom I had near forgotten; then my father, stern and upright, the servants, the nursery, all the familiar things of home. Then the front door and the busy streets, with traffic to and fro. I looked and marvelled, and looked half doubtfully again into the woman's face and turned the pages over, skipping this and that, to see more of this book and more, and so at last I came to myself hovering and hesitating outside the green door in the long white wall, and felt again the conflict and the fear.

"And next?" I cried, and would have turned

on, but the cool hand of the grave woman delayed me.

"Next?" I insisted, and struggled gently with her hand, pulling up her fingers with all my childish strength, and as she yielded and the page came over she bent down upon me like a shadow and kissed my brow.

'But the page did not show the enchanted garden, nor the panthers, nor the girl who had led me by the hand, nor the playfellows who had been so loath to let me go. It showed a long gray street in West Kensington, in that chill hour of afternoon before the lamps are lit, and I was there, a wretched little figure, weeping aloud, for all that I could do to restrain myself, and I was weeping because I could not return to my dear playfellows who had called after me, "Come back to us! Come back to us soon!" I was there. This was no page in a book, but harsh reality; that enchanted place and the restraining hand of the grave mother at whose knee I stood had gone—whither had they gone?'

He halted again, and remained for a time staring into the fire.

'Oh! the woefulness of that return!' he murmured.

'Well?' I said, after a minute or so.

'Poor little wretch I was!—brought back to this gray world again! As I realised the fullness of what had happened to me, I gave way to quite ungovernable grief. And the shame and humiliation of that public weeping and my disgraceful homecoming remain with me still. I see again the benevolent-looking old gentleman in gold spectacles who stopped and spoke to me—prodding me first

with his umbrella. "Poor little chap," said he; "and are you lost then?"—and me a London boy of five and more! And he must needs bring in a kindly young policeman and make a crowd of me, and so march me home. Sobbing, conspicuous, and frightened, I came back from the enchanted garden to the steps of my father's house.

"That is as well as I can remember my vision of that garden—the garden that haunts me still. Of course, I can convey nothing of that indescribable quality of translucent unreality, that *difference* from the common things of experience that hung about it all; but that—that is what happened. If it was a dream, I am sure it was a daytime and altogether extraordinary dream. . . . H'm!—naturally there followed a terrible questioning, by my aunt, my father, the nurse, the governess—every one. . . .

"I tried to tell them, and my father gave me my first thrashing for telling lies. When afterwards I tried to tell my aunt, she punished me again for my wicked persistence. Then, as I said, every one was forbidden to listen to me, to hear a word about it. Even my fairy-tale books were taken away from me for a time—because I was too "imaginative." Eh? Yes, they did that! My father belonged to the old school. . . . And my story was driven back upon myself. I whispered it to my pillow—my pillow that was often damp and salt to my whispering lips with childish tears. And I added always to my official and less fervent prayers this one heartfelt request: "Please God I may dream of the garden. Oh! take me back to my garden!" Take me back to my garden! I dreamt often of the

garden. I may have added to it, I may have changed it; I do not know. . . . All this, you understand, is an attempt to reconstruct from fragmentary memories a very early experience. Between that and the other consecutive memories of my boyhood there is a gulf. A time came when it seemed impossible I should ever speak of that wonder glimpse again.'

I asked an obvious question.

'No,' he said. 'I don't remember that I ever attempted to find my way back to the garden in those early years. This seems odd to me now, but I think that very probably a closer watch was kept on my movements after this misadventure to prevent my going astray. No, it wasn't till you knew me that I tried for the garden again. And I believe there was a period—incredible as it seems now—when I forgot the garden altogether—when I was about eight or nine it may have been. Do you remember me as a kid at Saint Æthelstan's?'

'Rather!'

'I didn't show any signs, did I, in those days of having a secret dream?'

II

He looked up with a sudden smile.

'Did you ever play North-West Passage with me? . . . No, of course you didn't come my way!'

'It was the sort of game,' he went on, 'that every imaginative child plays all day. The idea was the discovery of a North-West Passage to school. The way to school was plain enough; the game consisted in finding some way that wasn't plain, start-

ing off ten minutes early in some almost hopeless direction, and working my way round through unaccustomed streets to my goal. And one day I got entangled among some rather low-class streets on the other side of Campden Hill, and I began to think that for once the game would be against me and that I should get to school late. I tried rather desperately a street that seemed a *cul-de-sac*, and found a passage at the end. I hurried through that with renewed hope. "I shall do it yet," I said, and passed a row of frowsy little shops that were inexplicably familiar to me, and behold! there was my long white wall and the green door that led to the enchanted garden!

"The thing whacked upon me suddenly. Then, after all, that garden, that wonderful garden, wasn't a dream!"

He paused.

"I suppose my second experience with the green door marks the world of difference there is between the busy life of a schoolboy and the infinite leisure of a child. Anyhow, this second time I didn't for a moment think of going in straight away. You see—— For one thing, my mind was full of the idea of getting to school in time—set on not breaking my record for punctuality. I must surely have felt *some* little desire at least to try the door—yes, I must have felt that. . . . But I seem to remember the attraction of the door mainly as another obstacle to my overmastering determination to get to school. I was immensely interested by this discovery I had made, of course—I went on with my mind full of it—but I went on. It didn't check me. I ran past, tugging out my watch, found I had ten

minutes still to spare, and then I was going downhill into familiar surroundings. I got to school, breathless, it is true, and wet with perspiration, but in time. I can remember hanging up my coat and hat. . . . Went right by it and left it behind me. Odd, eh?

He looked at me thoughtfully. 'Of course I didn't know then that it wouldn't always be there. Schoolboys have limited imaginations. I suppose I thought it was an awfully jolly thing to have it there, to know my way back to it, but there was the school tugging at me. I expect I was a good deal distraught and inattentive that morning, recalling what I could of the beautiful strange people I should presently see again. Oddly enough I had no doubt in my mind that they would be glad to see me. . . . Yes, I must have thought of the garden that morning just as a jolly sort of place to which one might resort in the interludes of a strenuous scholastic career.

'I didn't go that day at all. The next day was a half holiday, and that may have weighed with me. Perhaps, too, my state of inattention brought down impositions upon me, and docked the margin of time necessary for the detour. I don't know. What I do know is that in the meantime the enchanted garden was so much upon my mind that I could not keep it to myself.

'I told. What was his name?—a ferrety-looking youngster we used to call Squiff.'

'Young Hopkins,' said I.

'Hopkins it was. I did not like telling him. I had a feeling that in some way it was against the rules to tell him, but I did. He was walking part of the

way home with me; he was talkative, and if we had not talked about the enchanted garden we should have talked of something else, and it was intolerable to me to think about any other subject. So I blabbed.

'Well, he told my secret. The next day in the play interval I found myself surrounded by half a dozen bigger boys, half teasing, and wholly curious to hear more of the enchanted garden. There was that big Fawcett—you remember him?—and Carnaby and Morley Reynolds. You weren't there by any chance? No, I think I should have remembered if you were. . . .

'A boy is a creature of odd feelings. I was, I really believe, in spite of my secret self-disgust, a little flattered to have the attention of these big fellows. I remember particularly a moment of pleasure caused by the praise of Crawshaw—you remember Crawshaw major, the son of Crawshaw the composer?—who said it was the best lie he had ever heard. But at the same time there was a really painful undertow of shame at telling what I felt was indeed a sacred secret. That beast Fawcett made a joke about the girl in green—'

Wallace's voice sank with the keen memory of that shame. 'I pretended not to hear,' he said. 'Well, then Carnaby suddenly called me a young liar, and disputed with me when I said the thing was true. I said I knew where to find the green door, could lead them all there in ten minutes. Carnaby became outrageously virtuous, and said I'd have to—and bear out my words or suffer. Did you ever have Carnaby twist your arm? Then perhaps you'll understand how it went with me. I

swore my story was true. There was nobody in the school then to save a chap from Carnaby, though Crawshaw put in a word or so. Carnaby had got his game. I grew excited and red-eared, and a little frightened. I behaved altogether like a silly little chap, and the outcome of it all was that instead of starting alone for my enchanted garden, I led the way presently—cheeks flushed, ears hot, eyes smarting, and my soul one burning misery and shame—for a party of six mocking, curious, and threatening schoolfellows.

'We never found the white wall and the green door. . . .'

'You mean——?'

'I mean I couldn't find it. I would have found it if I could.'

'And afterwards when I could go alone I couldn't find it. I never found it. I seem now to have been always looking for it through my schoolboy days, but I never came upon it—never.'

'Did the fellows—make it disagreeable?'

'Beastly. . . . Carnaby held a council over me for wanton lying. I remember how I sneaked home and upstairs to hide the marks of my blubbing. But when I cried myself to sleep at last it wasn't for Carnaby, but for the garden, for the beautiful afternoon I had hoped for, for the sweet friendly women and the waiting playfellows, and the game I had hoped to learn again, that beautiful forgotten game. . . .'

'I believed firmly that if I had not told— . . . I had bad times after that—crying at night and wool-gathering by day. For two terms I slackened and had bad reports. Do you remember? Of

course you would! It was *you*—your beating me in mathematics that brought me back to the grind again.'

III

For a time my friend stared silently into the red heart of the fire. Then he said: 'I never saw it again until I was seventeen.

'It leapt upon me for the third time—as I was driving to Paddington on my way to Oxford and a scholarship I had just one momentary glimpse. I was leaning over the apron of my hansom smoking a cigarette, and no doubt thinking myself no end of a man of the world, and suddenly there was the door, the wall, the dear sense of unforgettable and still attainable things.

'We clattered by—I too taken by surprise to stop my cab until we were well past and round a corner. Then I had a queer moment, a double and divergent movement of my will: I tapped the little door in the roof of the cab, and brought my arm down to pull out my watch. "Yes, sir!" said the cabman, smartly. "Er—well—it's nothing," I cried. "*My* mistake! We haven't much time! Go on!" And he went on. . . .

'I got my scholarship. And the night after I was told of that I sat over my fire in my little upper room, my study, in my father's house, with his praise—his rare praise—and his sound counsels ringing in my ears, and I smoked my favourite pipe—the formidable bulldog of adolescence—and thought of that door in the long white wall. "If I had stopped," I thought, "I should have missed my scholarship, I should have missed Oxford—muddled all the fine career before me! I begin to

see things better!" I fell musing deeply, but I did not doubt then this career of mine was a thing that merited sacrifice.

"Those dear friends and that clear atmosphere seemed very sweet to me, very fine but remote. My grip was fixing now upon the world. I saw another door opening—the door of my career."

He stared again into the fire. Its red light picked out a stubborn strength in his face for just one flickering moment, and then it vanished again.

"Well," he said and sighed, "I have served that career. I have done—much work, much hard work. But I have dreamt of the enchanted garden a thousand dreams, and seen its door, or at least glimpsed its door, four times since then. Yes—four times. For a while this world was so bright and interesting, seemed so full of meaning and opportunity, that the half-effaced charm of the garden was by comparison gentle and remote. Who wants to pat panthers on the way to dinner with pretty women and distinguished men? I came down to London from Oxford, a man of bold promise that I have done something to redeem. Something—and yet there have been disappointments. . . .

"Twice I have been in love—I will not dwell on that—but once, as I went to some one who, I knew, doubted whether I dared to come, I took a short cut at a venture through an unfrequented road near Earl's Court, and so happened on a white wall and a familiar green door. "Odd!" said I to myself, "but I thought this place was on Campden Hill. It's the place I never could find somehow—like counting Stonehenge—the place of that queer day-dream of mine." And I went by it intent upon

my purpose. It had no appeal to me that afternoon.

'I had just a moment's impulse to try the door, three steps aside were needed at the most—though I was sure enough in my heart that it would open to me—and then I thought that doing so might delay me on the way to that appointment in which I thought my honour was involved. Afterwards I was sorry for my punctuality—I might at least have peeped in, I thought, and waved a hand to those panthers, but I knew enough by this time not to seek again belatedly that which is not found by seeking. Yes, that time made me very sorry. . . .

'Years of hard work after that, and never a sight of the door. It's only recently it has come back to me. With it there has come a sense as though some thin tarnish had spread itself over my world. I began to think of it as a sorrowful and bitter thing that I should never see that door again. Perhaps I was suffering a little from overwork—perhaps it was what I've heard spoken of as the feeling of forty. I don't know. But certainly the keen brightness that makes effort easy has gone out of things recently, and that just at a time—with all these new political developments—when I ought to be working. Odd, isn't it? But I do begin to find life toilsome, its rewards, as I come near them, cheap. I began a little while ago to want the garden quite badly. Yes—and I've seen it three times.'

'The garden?'

'No—the door! And I haven't gone in!'

He leant over the table to me, with an enormous sorrow in his voice as he spoke. 'Thrice I have had my chance—*thrice!* If ever that door offers itself

to me again, I swore, I will go in, out of this dust and heat, out of this dry glitter of vanity, out of these toilsome futilities. I will go and never return. This time I will stay. . . . I swore it, and when the time came—I *didn't* go.

‘Three times in one year have I passed that door and failed to enter. Three times in the last year.

‘The first time was on the night of the snatch division on the Tenants’ Redemption Bill, on which the Government was saved by a majority of three. You remember? No one on our side—perhaps very few on the opposite side—expected the end that night. Then the debate collapsed like eggshells. I and Hotchkiss were dining with his cousin at Brentford; we were both unpaired, and we were called up by telephone, and set off at once in his cousin’s motor. We got in barely in time, and on the way we passed my wall and door—livid in the moonlight, blotched with hot yellow as the glare of our lamps lit it, but unmistakable. “My God!” cried I. “What?” said Hotchkiss. “Nothing!” I answered, and the moment passed.

‘“I’ve made a great sacrifice,” I told the whip as I got in. “They all have,” he said, and hurried by.

‘I do not see how I could have done otherwise then. And the next occasion was as I rushed to my father’s bedside to bid that stern old man farewell. Then, too, the claims of life were imperative. But the third time was different; it happened a week ago. It fills me with hot remorse to recall it. I was with Gurker and Ralphs—it’s no secret now, you know, that I’ve had my talk with Gurker. We had been dining at Frobisher’s, and the talk had become intimate between us. The question of my

place in the reconstructed Ministry lay always just over the boundary of the discussion. Yes—yes. That's all settled. It needn't be talked about yet, but there's no reason to keep a secret from you. . . . Yes—thanks! thanks! But let me tell you my story.

'Then, on that night things were very much in the air. My position was a very delicate one. I was keenly anxious to get some definite word from Gurker, but was hampered by Ralphs' presence. I was using the best power of my brain to keep that light and careless talk not too obviously directed to the point that concerned me. I had to. Ralphs' behaviour since has more than justified my caution. . . . Ralphs, I knew, would leave us beyond the Kensington High Street, and then I could surprise Gurker by a sudden frankness. One has sometimes to resort to these little devices. . . . And then it was that in the margin of my field of vision I became aware once more of the white wall, the green door before us down the road.

'We passed it talking. I passed it. I can still see the shadow of Gurker's marked profile, his opera hat tilted forward over his prominent nose, the many folds of his neck wrap going before my shadow and Ralphs' as we sauntered past.

'I passed within twenty inches of the door. "If I say good-night to them, and go in," I asked myself, "what will happen?" And I was all a-tingle for that word with Gurker.

'I could not answer that question in the tangle of my other problems. "They will think me mad," I thought. "And suppose I vanish now!—Amazing disappearance of a prominent politician!" That

weighed with me. A thousand inconceivably petty worldlinesses weighed with me in that crisis.'

Then he turned on me with a sorrowful smile, and, speaking slowly, 'Here I am!' he said.

'Here I am!' he repeated, 'and my chance has gone from me. Three times in one year the door has been offered me—the door that goes into peace, into delight, into a beauty beyond dreaming, a kindness no man on earth can know. And I have rejected it, Redmond, and it has gone——'

'How do you know?'

'I know. I know. I am left now to work it out, to stick to the tasks that held me so strongly when my moments came. You say I have success—this vulgar, tawdry, irksome, envied thing. I have it.' He had a walnut in his big hand. 'If that was my success,' he said, and crushed it, and held it out for me to see.

'Let me tell you something, Redmond. This loss is destroying me. For two months, for ten weeks nearly now, I have done no work at all, except the most necessary and urgent duties. My soul is full of inappeasable regrets. At nights—when it is less likely I shall be recognised—I go out. I wander. Yes. I wonder what people would think of that if they knew. A Cabinet Minister, the responsible head of that most vital of all departments, wandering alone—grieving—sometimes near audibly lamenting—for a door, for a garden!'

IV

I can see now his rather pallid face, and the unfamiliar sombre fire that had come into his eyes. I see him very vividly to-night. I sit recalling his

words, his tones, and last evening's *Westminster Gazette* still lies on my sofa, containing the notice of his death. At lunch to-day the club was busy with his death. We talked of nothing else.

They found his body very early yesterday morning in a deep excavation near East Kensington Station. It is one of two shafts that have been made in connection with an extension of the railway southward. It is protected from the intrusion of the public by a hoarding upon the high road, in which a small doorway has been cut for the convenience of some of the workmen who live in that direction. The doorway was left unfastened through a misunderstanding between two gangers, and through it he made his way. . . .

My mind is darkened with questions and riddles.

It would seem he walked all the way from the House that night—he has frequently walked home during the past Session—and so it is I figure his dark form coming along the late and empty streets, wrapped up, intent. And then did the pale electric lights near the station cheat the rough planking into a semblance of white? Did that fatal unfastened door awaken some memory?

Was there, after all, ever any green door in the wall at all?

I do not know. I have told his story as he told it to me. There are times when I believe that Wallace was no more than the victim of the coincidence between a rare but not unprecedented type of hallucination and a careless trap, but that indeed is not my profoundest belief. You may think me superstitious, if you will, and foolish; but, indeed, I am more than half convinced that he had, in

truth, an abnormal gift, and a sense, something—I know not what—that in the guise of wall and door offered him an outlet, a secret and peculiar passage of escape into another and altogether more beautiful world. At any rate, you will say, it betrayed him in the end. But did it betray him? There you touch the inmost mystery of these dreamers, these men of vision and the imagination. We see our world fair and common, the hoarding and the pit. By our daylight standard he walked out of security into darkness, danger, and death.

But did he see like that?

NEGOTIUM PERAMBULANS . . .

By E. F. BENSON

THE casual tourist in West Cornwall may just possibly have noticed, as he bowled along over the bare high plateau between Penzance and the Land's End, a dilapidated signpost pointing down a steep lane and bearing on its battered finger the faded inscription 'Polearn 2 miles,' but probably very few have had the curiosity to traverse those two miles in order to see a place to which their guide-books award so cursory a notice. It is described there, in a couple of unattractive lines, as a small fishing village with a church of no particular interest except for certain carved and painted wooden panels (originally belonging to an earlier edifice) which form an altar-rail. But the church at St. Creed (the tourist is reminded) has a similar decoration far superior in point of preservation and interest, and thus even the ecclesiastically disposed are not lured to Polearn. So meagre a bait is scarce worth swallowing, and a glance at the very steep lane which in dry weather presents a carpet of sharp-pointed stones, and after rain a muddy watercourse, will almost certainly decide him not to expose his motor or his bicycle to risks like these in so sparsely populated a district. Hardly a house has met his eye since he left Penzance, and the possible trundling of a punctured bicycle for half a dozen weary miles seems a high price to pay for the sight of a few painted panels.

Polearn, therefore, even in the high noon of the tourist season, is little liable to invasion, and for the rest of the year I do not suppose that a couple of folk a day traverse those two miles (long ones at that) of steep and stony gradient. I am not forgetting the postman in this exiguous estimate, for the days are few when, leaving his pony and cart at the top of the hill, he goes as far as the village, since but a few hundred yards down the lane there stands a large white box, like a sea-trunk, by the side of the road, with a slit for letters and a locked door. Should he have in his wallet a registered letter or be the bearer of a parcel too large for insertion in the square lips of the sea-trunk, he must needs trudge down the hill and deliver the troublesome missive, leaving it in person on the owner, and receiving some small reward of coin or refreshment for his kindness. But such occasions are rare, and his general routine is to take out of the box such letters as may have been deposited there, and insert in their place such letters as he has brought. These will be called for, perhaps that day or perhaps the next, by an emissary from the Polearn post-office. As for the fishermen of the place, who, in their export trade, constitute the chief link of movement between Polearn and the outside world, they would not dream of taking their catch up the steep lane and so, with six miles farther of travel, to the market at Penzance. The sea route is shorter and easier, and they deliver their wares to the pier-head. Thus, though the sole industry of Polearn is sea-fishing, you will get no fish there unless you have bespoken your requirements to one of the fishermen. Back come the trawlers as empty

as a haunted house, while their spoils are in the fish-train that is speeding to London.

Such isolation of a little community, continued, as it has been, for centuries, produces isolation in the individual as well, and nowhere will you find greater independence of character than among the people of Polearn. But they are linked together, so it has always seemed to me, by some mysterious comprehension: it is as if they had all been initiated into some ancient rite, inspired and framed by forces visible and invisible. The winter storms that batter the coast, the vernal spell of the spring, the hot, still summers, the season of rains and autumnal decay, have made a spell which, line by line, has been communicated to them, concerning the powers, evil and good, that rule the world, and manifest themselves in ways benignant or terrible. . . .

I came to Polearn first at the age of ten, a small boy, weak and sickly, and threatened with pulmonary trouble. My father's business kept him in London, while for me abundance of fresh air and a mild climate were considered essential conditions if I was to grow to manhood. His sister had married the vicar of Polearn, Richard Bolitho, himself native to the place, and so it came about that I spent three years, as a paying guest, with my relations. Richard Bolitho owned a fine house in the place, which he inhabited in preference to the vicarage, which he let to a young artist, John Evans, on whom the spell of Polearn had fallen, for from year's beginning to year's end he never left it. There was a solid roofed shelter, open on one side to the air, built for me in the garden, and

here I lived and slept, passing scarcely one hour out of the twenty-four behind walls and windows. I was out on the bay with the fisher-folk, or wandering along the gorse-clad cliffs that climbed steeply to right and left of the deep combe where the village lay, or pottering about on the pier-head, or bird's-nesting in the bushes with the boys of the village. Except on Sunday and for the few daily hours of my lessons, I might do what I pleased so long as I remained in the open air. About the lessons there was nothing formidable; my uncle conducted me through flowering bypaths among the thickets of arithmetic, and made pleasant excursions into the elements of Latin grammar, and above all, he made me daily give him an account, in clear and grammatical sentences, of what had been occupying my mind or my movements. Should I select to tell him about a walk along the cliffs, my speech must be orderly, not vague, slipshod notes of what I had observed. In this way, too, he trained my observation, for he would bid me tell him what flowers were in bloom, and what birds hovered fishing over the sea or were building in the bushes. For that I owe him a perennial gratitude, for to observe and to express my thoughts in the clear spoken word became my life's profession.

But far more formidable than my weekday tasks was the prescribed routine for Sunday. Some dark embers compounded of Calvinism and mysticism smouldered in my uncle's soul, and made it a day of terror. His sermon in the morning scorched us with a foretaste of the eternal fires reserved for unrepentant sinners, and he was hardly less terrifying

at the children's service in the afternoon. Well do I remember his exposition of the doctrine of guardian angels. A child, he said, might think himself secure in such angelic care, but let him beware of committing any of those numerous offences which would cause his guardian to turn his face from him, for as sure as there were angels to protect us, there were also evil and awful presences which were ready to pounce; and on them he dwelt with peculiar gusto. Well, too, do I remember in the morning sermon his commentary on the carved panels of the altar-rails to which I have already alluded. There was the angel of the Annunciation there, and the angel of the Resurrection, but not less was there the witch of Endor, and, on the fourth panel, a scene that concerned me most of all. This fourth panel (he came down from his pulpit to trace its time-worn features) represented the lych-gate of the church-yard at Polearn itself, and indeed the resemblance when thus pointed out was remarkable. In the entry stood the figure of a robed priest holding up a Cross, with which he faced a terrible creature like a gigantic slug, that reared itself up in front of him. That, so ran my uncle's interpretation, was some evil agency, such as he had spoken about to us children, of almost infinite malignity and power, which could alone be combated by firm faith and a pure heart. Below ran the legend '*Negotium perambulans in tenebris*' from the ninety-first Psalm. We should find it translated there, 'the pestilence that walketh in darkness,' which but feebly rendered the Latin. It was more deadly to the soul than any pestilence that can only kill the body: it was the Thing, the Creature, the Busi-

ness that trafficked in the outer Darkness, a minister of God's wrath on the unrighteous. . . .

I could see, as he spoke, the looks which the congregation exchanged with each other, and knew that his words were evoking a surmise, a remembrance. Nods and whispers passed between them, they understood to what he alluded, and with the inquisitiveness of boyhood I could not rest till I had wormed the story out of my friends among the fisher-boys, as, next morning, we sat basking and naked in the sun after our bathe. One knew one bit of it, one another, but it pieced together into a truly alarming legend. In bald outline it was as follows:

A church far more ancient than that in which my uncle terrified us every Sunday had once stood not three hundred yards away, on the shelf of level ground below the quarry from which its stones were hewn. The owner of the land had pulled this down, and erected for himself a house on the same site out of these materials, keeping, in a very ecstasy of wickedness, the altar, and on this he dined and played dice afterwards. But as he grew old some black melancholy seized him, and he would have lights burning there all night, for he had deadly fear of the darkness. On one winter evening there sprang up such a gale as was never before known, which broke in the windows of the room where he had supped, and extinguished the lamps. Yells of terror brought in his servants, who found him lying on the floor with the blood streaming from his throat. As they entered some huge black shadow seemed to move away from him, crawled across the floor and up the wall and out of the broken window.

'There he lay a-dying,' said the last of my informants, 'and him that had been a great burly man was withered to a bag o' skin, for the critter had drained all the blood from him. His last breath was a scream, and he hollered out the same words as passon read off the screen.'

'*Negotium perambulans in tenebris*,' I suggested eagerly.

'Thereabouts. Latin anyhow.'

'And after that?' I asked.

'Nobody would go near the place, and the old house rotted and fell in ruins till three years ago, when along comes Mr. Dooliss from Penzance, and built the half of it up again. But he don't care much about such critters, nor about Latin neither. He takes his bottle of whisky a day and gets drunk's a lord in the evening. Eh, I'm gwine home to my dinner.'

Whatever the authenticity of the legend, I had certainly heard the truth about Mr. Dooliss from Penzance, who from that day became an object of keen curiosity on my part, the more so because the quarry-house adjoined my uncle's garden. The Thing that walked in the dark failed to stir my imagination, and already I was so used to sleeping alone in my shelter that the night had no terrors for me. But it would be intensely exciting to wake at some timeless hour and hear Mr. Dooliss yelling, and conjecture that the Thing had got him.

But by degrees the whole story faded from my mind, overshadowed by the more vivid interests of the day, and, for the last two years of my out-door life in the vicarage garden, I seldom thought about Mr. Dooliss and the possible fate that might await him

for his temerity in living in the place where that Thing of darkness had done business. Occasionally I saw him over the garden fence, a great yellow lump of a man, with slow and staggering gait, but never did I set eyes on him outside his gate, either in the village street or down on the beach. He interfered with none, and no one interfered with him. If he wanted to run the risk of being the prey of the legendary nocturnal monster, or quietly drink himself to death, it was his affair. My uncle, so I gathered, had made several attempts to see him when first he came to live at Polearn, but Mr. Dooliss appeared to have no use for parsons, but said he was not at home and never returned the call.

After three years of sun, wind, and rain, I had completely outgrown my early symptoms and had become a tough, strapping youngster of thirteen. I was sent to Eton and Cambridge, and in due course ate my dinners and became a barrister. In twenty years from that time I was earning a yearly income of five figures, and had already laid by in sound securities a sum that brought me dividends which would, for one of my simple tastes and frugal habits, supply me with all the material comforts I needed on this side of the grave. The great prizes of my profession were already within my reach, but I had no ambition beckoning me on, nor did I want a wife and children, being, I must suppose, a natural celibate. In fact there was only one ambition which through these busy years had held the lure of blue and far-off hills to me, and that was to get back to Polearn, and live once more isolated from the world with the sea and the gorse-clad hills

for play-fellows, and the secrets that lurked there for exploration. The spell of it had been woven about my heart, and I can truly say that there had hardly passed a day in all those years in which the thought of it and the desire for it had been wholly absent from my mind. Though I had been in frequent communication with my uncle there during his lifetime, and, after his death, with his widow who still lived there, I had never been back to it since I embarked on my profession, for I knew that if I went there, it would be a wrench beyond my power to tear myself away again. But I had made up my mind that when once I had provided for my own independence, I would go back there not to leave it again. And yet I did leave it again, and now nothing in the world would induce me to turn down the lane from the road that leads from Penzance to the Land's End, and see the sides of the combe rise steep above the roofs of the village and hear the gulls chiding as they fish in the bay. One of the things invisible, of the dark powers, leaped into light, and I saw it with my eyes.

The house where I had spent those three years of boyhood had been left for life to my aunt, and when I made known to her my intention of coming back to Polearn, she suggested that, till I found a suitable house or found her proposal unsuitable, I should come to live with her.

'The house is too big for a lone old woman,' she wrote, 'and I have often thought of quitting and taking a little cottage sufficient for me and my requirements. But come and share it, my dear, and if you find me troublesome, you or I can go. You may want solitude—most people in Polearn do—

and will leave me. Or else I will leave you: one of the main reasons of my stopping here all these years was a feeling that I must not let the old house starve. Houses starve, you know, if they are not lived in. They die a lingering death; the spirit in them grows weaker and weaker, and at last fades out of them. Isn't this nonsense to your London notions? . . .'

Naturally I accepted with warmth this tentative arrangement, and on an evening in June found myself at the head of the lane leading down to Polearn, and once more I descended into the steep valley between the hills. Time had stood still apparently for the combe, the dilapidated signpost (or its successor) pointed a rickety finger down the lane, and a few hundred yards farther on was the white box for the exchange of letters. Point after remembered point met my eye, and what I saw was not shrunk, as is often the case with the revisited scenes of childhood, into a smaller scale. There stood the post-office, and there the church and close beside it the vicarage, and beyond, the tall shrubberies which separated the house for which I was bound from the road, and beyond that again the grey roofs of the quarry-house damp and shining with the moist evening wind from the sea. All was exactly as I remembered it, and, above all, that sense of seclusion and isolation. Somewhere above the tree-tops climbed the lane which joined the main road to Penzance, but all that had become immeasurably distant. The years that had passed since last I turned in at the well-known gate faded like a frosty breath, and vanished in this warm, soft air. There were law-courts somewhere in

memory's dull book which, if I cared to turn the pages, would tell me that I had made a name and a great income there. But the dull book was closed now, for I was back in Polearn, and the spell was woven around me again.

And if Polearn was unchanged, so too was Aunt Hester, who met me at the door. Dainty and china-white she had always been, and the years had not aged but only refined her. As we sat and talked after dinner she spoke of all that had happened in Polearn in that score of years, and yet somehow the changes of which she spoke seemed but to confirm the immutability of it all. As the recollection of names came back to me, I asked her about the quarry-house and Mr. Dooliss, and her face gloomed a little as with a shadow of a cloud on a spring day.

'Yes, Mr. Dooliss,' she said, 'poor Mr. Dooliss, how well I remember him, though it must be ten years and more since he died. I never wrote to you about it, for it was all very dreadful, my dear, and I did not want to darken your memories of Polearn. Your uncle always thought that something of the sort might happen if he went on in his wicked, drunken ways, and worse than that, and though nobody knew exactly what took place, it was the sort of thing that might have been anticipated.'

'But what more or less happened, Aunt Hester?' I asked.

'Well, of course I can't tell you everything, for no one knew it. But he was a very sinful man, and the scandal about him at Newlyn was shocking. And then he lived, too, in the quarry-house. . . . I wonder if by any chance you remember a sermon

of your uncle's when he got out of the pulpit and explained that panel in the altar-rails, the one, I mean, with the horrible creature rearing itself up outside the lych-gate?

'Yes, I remember perfectly,' said I.

'Ah. It made an impression on you, I suppose, and so it did on all who heard him, and that impression got stamped and branded on us all when the catastrophe occurred. Somehow Mr. Dooliss got to hear about your uncle's sermon, and in some drunken fit he broke into the church and smashed the panel to atoms. He seems to have thought that there was some magic in it, and that if he destroyed that he would get rid of the terrible fate that was threatening him. For I must tell you that before he committed that dreadful sacrilege he had been a haunted man: he hated and feared darkness, for he thought that the creature on the panel was on his track, but that as long as he kept lights burning it could not touch him. But the panel, to his disordered mind, was the root of his terror, and so, as I said, he broke into the church and attempted—you will see why I said "attempted"—to destroy it. It certainly was found in splinters next morning, when your uncle went into church for matins, and knowing Mr. Dooliss's fear of the panel, he went across to the quarry-house afterwards and taxed him with its destruction. The man never denied it; he boasted of what he had done. There he sat, though it was early morning, drinking his whisky.

'“I've settled your Thing for you,” he said, “and your sermon too. A fig for such superstitions.”

'Your uncle left him without answering his blas-

phemy, meaning to go straight into Penzance and give information to the police about this outrage to the church, but on his way back from the quarry-house he went into the church again, in order to be able to give details about the damage, and there in the screen was the panel, untouched and uninjured. And yet he had himself seen it smashed, and Mr. Dooliss had confessed that the destruction of it was his work. But there it was, and whether the power of God had mended it or some other power, who knows?

This was Polearn indeed, and it was the spirit of Polearn that made me accept all Aunt Hester was telling me as attested fact. It had happened like that. She went on in her quiet voice.

'Your uncle recognised that some power beyond police was at work, and he did not go to Penzance or give information about the outrage, for the evidence of it had vanished.'

A sudden spate of scepticism swept over me.

'There must have been some mistake,' I said. 'It hadn't been broken. . . .'

She smiled.

'Yes, my dear, but you have been in London so long,' she said. 'Let me, anyhow, tell you the rest of my story. That night, for some reason, I could not sleep. It was very hot and airless; I dare say you will think that the sultry conditions accounted for my wakefulness. Once and again, as I went to the window to see if I could not admit more air, I could see from it the quarry-house, and I noticed the first time that I left my bed that it was blazing with lights. But the second time I saw that it was all in darkness, and as I wondered at that, I heard

a terrible scream, and the moment afterwards the steps of some one coming at full speed down the road outside the gate. He yelled as he ran; "Light, light!" he called out. "Give me light, or it will catch me!" It was very terrible to hear that, and I went to rouse my husband, who was sleeping in the dressing-room across the passage. He wasted no time, but by now the whole village was aroused by the screams, and when he got down to the pier he found that all was over. The tide was low, and on the rocks at its foot was lying the body of Mr. Dooliss. He must have cut some artery when he fell on those sharp edges of stone, for he had bled to death, they thought, and though he was a big burly man, his corpse was but skin and bones. Yet there was no pool of blood round him, such as you would have expected. Just skin and bones as if every drop of blood in his body had been sucked out of him!

She leaned forward.

'You and I, my dear, know what happened,' she said, 'or at least can guess. God has His instruments of vengeance on those who bring wickedness into places that have been holy. Dark and mysterious are His ways.'

Now what I should have thought of such a story if it had been told me in London I can easily imagine. There was such an obvious explanation: the man in question had been a drunkard, what wonder if the demons of delirium pursued him? But here in Polearn it was different.

'And who is in the quarry-house now?' I asked. 'Years ago the fisher-boys told me the story of the man who first built it and of his horrible end. And

now again it has happened. Surely no one has ventured to inhabit it once more?’

I saw in her face, even before I asked that question, that somebody had done so.

‘Yes, it is lived in again,’ said she, ‘for there is no end to the blindness. . . . I don’t know if you remember him. He was tenant of the vicarage many years ago.’

‘John Evans,’ said I.

‘Yes. Such a nice fellow he was too. Your uncle was pleased to get so good a tenant. And now——’

She rose.

‘Aunt Hester, you shouldn’t leave your sentences unfinished,’ I said.

She shook her head.

‘My dear, that sentence will finish itself,’ she said. ‘But what a time of night! I must go to bed, and you too, or they will think we have to keep lights burning here through the dark hours.’

Before getting into bed I drew my curtains wide and opened all the windows to the warm tide of the sea air that flowed softly in. Looking out into the garden I could see in the moonlight the roof of the shelter, in which for three years I had lived, gleaming with dew. That, as much as anything, brought back the old days to which I had now returned, and they seemed of one piece with the present, as if no gap of more than twenty years sundered them. The two flowed into one like globules of mercury uniting into a softly shining globe, of mysterious lights and reflections. Then, raising my eyes a little, I saw against the black hill-side the windows of the quarry-house still alight.

Morning, as is so often the case, brought no shattering of my illusion. As I began to regain consciousness, I fancied that I was a boy again waking up in the shelter in the garden, and though, as I grew more widely awake, I smiled at the impression, that on which it was based I found to be indeed true. It was sufficient now as then to be here, to wander again on the cliffs, and hear the popping of the ripened seed-pods on the gorse-bushes; to stray along the shore to the bathing-cove, to float and drift and swim in the warm tide, and bask on the sand, and watch the gulls fishing, to lounge on the pier-head with the fisher-folk, to see in their eyes and hear in their quiet speech the evidence of secret things not so much known to them as part of their instincts and their very being. There were powers and presences about me; the white poplars that stood by the stream that babbled down the valley knew of them, and showed a glimpse of their knowledge sometimes, like the gleam of their white underleaves; the very cobbles that paved the street were soaked in it. . . . All that I wanted was to lie there and grow soaked in it too; unconsciously, as a boy, I had done that, but now the process must be conscious. I must know what stir of forces, fruitful and mysterious, seethed along the hill-side at noon, and sparkled at night on the sea. They could be known, they could even be controlled by those who were masters of the spell, but never could they be spoken of, for they were dwellers in the innermost, grafted into the eternal life of the world. There were dark secrets as well as these clear, kindly powers, and to these no doubt belonged the *negotium perambulans in tenebris* which,

though of deadly malignity, might be regarded not only as evil, but as the avenger of sacrilegious and impious deeds. . . . All this was part of the spell of Polearn, of which the seeds had long lain dormant in me. But now they were sprouting, and who knew what strange flower would unfold on their stems?

It was not long before I came across John Evans. One morning, as I lay on the beach, there came shambling across the sand a man stout and middle-aged with the face of Silenus. He paused as he drew near and regarded me from narrow eyes.

'Why, you're the little chap that used to live in the parson's garden,' he said. 'Don't you recognise me?'

I saw who it was when he spoke: his voice, I think, instructed me, and recognising it, I could see the features of the strong, alert young man in this gross caricature.

'Yes, you're John Evans,' I said. 'You used to be very kind to me: you used to draw pictures for me.'

'So I did, and I'll draw you some more. Been bathing? That's a risky performance. You never know what lives in the sea, nor what lives on the land for that matter. Not that I heed them. I stick to work and whisky. God! I've learned to paint since I saw you, and drink too for that matter. I live in the quarry-house, you know, and it's a powerful thirsty place. Come and have a look at my things if you're passing. Staying with your aunt, are you? I could do a wonderful portrait of her. Interesting face; she knows a lot. People who live at Polearn get to know a lot, though I don't

take much stock in that sort of knowledge myself.'

I do not know when I have been at once so repelled and interested. Behind the mere grossness of his face there lurked something which, while it appalled, yet fascinated me. His thick lisping speech had the same quality. And his paintings, what would they be like? . . .

'I was just going home,' I said. 'I'll gladly come in, if you'll allow me.'

He took me through the untended and overgrown garden into the house which I had never yet entered. A great grey cat was sunning itself in the window, and an old woman was laying lunch in a corner of the cool hall into which the door opened. It was built of stone, and the carved mouldings let into the walls, the fragments of gargoyles and sculptured images, bore testimony to the truth of its having been built out of the demolished church. In one corner was an oblong and carved wooden table littered with a painter's apparatus and stacks of canvases leaned against the walls.

He jerked his thumb towards a head of an angel that was built into the mantelpiece and giggled.

'Quite a sanctified air,' he said, 'so we tone it down for the purposes of ordinary life by a different sort of art. Have a drink? No? Well, turn over some of my pictures while I put myself to rights.'

He was justified in his own estimate of his skill: he could paint (and apparently he could paint anything), but never have I seen pictures so inexplicably hellish. There were exquisite studies of trees, and you knew that something lurked in the flickering shadows. There was a drawing of his cat sun-

ning itself in the window, even as I had just now seen it, and yet it was no cat but some beast of awful malignity. There was a boy stretched naked on the sands, not human, but some evil thing which had come out of the sea. Above all there were pictures of his garden overgrown and jungle-like, and you knew that in the bushes were presences ready to spring out on you. . . .

'Well, do you like my style?' he said as he came up, glass in hand. (The tumbler of spirits that he held had not been diluted.) 'I try to paint the essence of what I see, not the mere husk and skin of it, but its nature, where it comes from and what gave it birth. There's much in common between a cat and a fuchsia-bush if you look at them closely enough. Everything came out of the slime of the pit, and it's all going back there. I should like to do a picture of you some day. I'd hold the mirror up to Nature, as that old lunatic said.'

After this first meeting I saw him occasionally throughout the months of that wonderful summer. Often he kept to his house and to his painting for days together, and then perhaps some evening I would find him lounging on the pier, always alone, and every time we met thus the repulsion and interest grew, for every time he seemed to have gone farther along a path of secret knowledge towards some evil shrine where complete initiation awaited him. . . . And then suddenly the end came.

I had met him thus one evening on the cliffs while the October sunset still burned in the sky, but over it with amazing rapidity there spread from the west a great blackness of cloud such as I have never seen for denseness. The light was

sucked from the sky, the dusk fell in ever thicker layers. He suddenly became conscious of this.

'I must get back as quick as I can,' he said. 'It will be dark in a few minutes, and my servant is out. The lamps will not be lit.'

He stepped out with extraordinary briskness for one who shambled and could scarcely lift his feet, and soon broke out into a stumbling run. In the gathering darkness I could see that his face was moist with the dew of some unspoken terror.

'You must come with me,' he panted, 'for so we shall get the lights burning the sooner. I cannot do without light.'

I had to exert myself to the full to keep up with him, for terror winged him, and even so I fell behind, so that when I came to the garden gate, he was already half-way up the path to the house. I saw him enter, leaving the door wide, and found him fumbling with matches. But his hand so trembled that he could not transfer the light to the wick of the lamp.

'But what's the hurry about?' I asked.

Suddenly his eyes focused themselves on the open door behind me, and he jumped from his seat beside the table which had once been the 'altar of God, with a gasp and a scream.

'No, no!' he cried. 'Keep it off! . . .'

I turned and saw what he had seen. The Thing had entered and now was swiftly sliding across the floor towards him, like some gigantic caterpillar. A stale phosphorescent light came from it, for though the dusk had grown to blackness outside, I could see it quite distinctly in the awful light of its own presence. From it too there came an odour

of corruption and decay, as from slime that has long lain below water. It seemed to have no head, but on the front of it was an orifice of puckered skin which opened and shut and slavered at the edges. It was hairless, and slug-like in shape and in texture. As it advanced its fore-part reared itself from the ground, like a snake about to strike, and it fastened on him. . . .

At that sight, and with the yells of his agony in my ears, the panic which had struck me relaxed into a hopeless courage, and with palsied, impotent hands I tried to lay hold of the Thing. But I could not: though something material was there, it was impossible to grasp it; my hands sunk in it as in thick mud. It was like wrestling with a nightmare.

I think that but a few seconds elapsed before all was over. The screams of the wretched man sank to moans and mutterings as the Thing fell on him: he panted once or twice and was still. For a moment longer there came gurglings and sucking noises, and then it slid out even as it had entered. I lit the lamp which he had fumbled with, and there on the floor he lay, no more than a rind of skin in loose folds over projecting bones.

RUNNING WOLF

By ALGERNON BLACKWOOD

THE man who enjoys an adventure outside the general experience of the race, and imparts it to others, must not be surprised if he is taken for either a liar or a fool, as Malcolm Hyde, hotel clerk on a holiday, discovered in due course. Nor is 'enjoy' the right word to use in describing his emotions; the word he chose was probably 'survive.'

When he first set eyes on Medicine Lake he was struck by its still, sparkling beauty, lying there in the vast Canadian backwoods; next, by its extreme loneliness; and, lastly—a good deal later, this—by its combination of beauty, loneliness, and singular atmosphere, due to the fact that it was the scene of his adventure.

'It's fairly stiff with big fish,' said Morton of the Montreal Sporting Club. 'Spend your holidays there—up Mattawa way, some fifteen miles west of Stony Creek. You'll have it all to yourself except for an old Indian who's got a shack there. Camp on the east side—if you'll take a tip from me.' He then talked for half an hour about the wonderful sport; yet he was not otherwise very communicative, and did not suffer questions gladly, Hyde noticed. Nor had he stayed there very long himself. If it was such a paradise as Morton, its discoverer and the most experienced rod in the province, claimed, why had he himself spent only three days there?

'Ran short of grub,' was the explanation offered; but to another friend he had mentioned briefly, 'flies,' and to a third, so Hyde learned later, he gave the excuse that his half-breed 'took sick,' necessitating a quick return to civilisation.

Hyde, however, cared little for the explanations; his interest in these came later. 'Stiff with fish' was the phrase he liked. He took the Canadian Pacific train to Mattawa, laid in his outfit at Stony Creek, and set off thence for the fifteen-mile canoe-trip without a care in the world.

Travelling light, the portages did not trouble him; the water was swift and easy, the rapids negotiable; everything came his way, as the saying is. Occasionally he saw big fish making for the deeper pools, and was sorely tempted to stop; but he resisted. He pushed on between the immense world of forests that stretched for hundreds of miles, known to deer, bear, moose, and wolf, but strange to any echo of human tread, a deserted and primeval wilderness. The autumn day was calm, the water sang and sparkled, the blue sky hung cloudless over all, ablaze with light. Toward evening he passed an old beaver-dam, rounded a little point, and had his first sight of Medicine Lake. He lifted his dripping paddle; the canoe shot with silent glide into the calm water. He gave an exclamation of delight, for the loveliness caught his breath away.

Though primarily a sportsman, he was not insensible to beauty. The lake formed a crescent, perhaps four miles long, its width between a mile and half a mile. The slanting gold of sunset flooded it. No wind stirred its crystal surface. Here it had

lain since the redskins' god first made it; here it would lie until he dried it up again. Towering spruce and hemlock trooped to its very edge, majestic cedars leaned down as if to drink, crimson sumachs shone in fiery patches, and maples gleamed orange and red beyond belief. The air was like wine, with the silence of a dream.

It was here the red men formerly 'made medicine,' with all the wild ritual and tribal ceremony of an ancient day. But it was of Morton, rather than of Indians, that Hyde thought. If this lonely, hidden paradise was really stiff with big fish, he owed a lot to Morton for the information. Peace invaded him, but the excitement of the hunter lay below.

He looked about him with quick, practised eye for a camping-place before the sun sank below the forests and the half-lights came. The Indian's shack, lying in full sunshine on the eastern shore, he found at once; but the trees lay too thick about it for comfort, nor did he wish to be so close to its inhabitant. Upon the opposite side, however, an ideal clearing offered. This lay already in shadow, the huge forest darkening it toward evening; but the open space attracted. He paddled over quickly and examined it. The ground was hard and dry, he found, and a little brook ran tinkling down one side of it into the lake. This outfall, too, would be a good fishing spot. Also it was sheltered. A few low willows marked the mouth.

An experienced camper soon makes up his mind. It was a perfect site, and some charred logs, with traces of former fires, proved that he was not the first to think so. Hyde was delighted. Then, suddenly, disappointment came to tinge his pleasure.

His kit was landed, and preparations for putting up the tent were begun, when he recalled a detail that excitement had so far kept in the background of his mind—Morton's advice. But not Morton's only, for the storekeeper at Stony Creek had reinforced it. The big fellow with straggling moustache and stooping shoulders, dressed in shirt and trousers, had handed him out a final sentence with the bacon, flour, condensed milk, and sugar. He had repeated Morton's half-forgotten words:

'Put yer tent on the east shore, I should,' he had said at parting.

He remembered Morton, too, apparently. 'A shortish fellow, brown as an Indian and fairly smelling of the woods. Travelling with Jake, the half-breed.' That assuredly was Morton. 'Didn't stay long, now, did he,' he added to himself in a reflective tone.

'Going Windy Lake way, are yer? Or Ten Mile Water, maybe?' he had first inquired of Hyde.

'Medicine Lake.'

'Is that so?' the man said, as though he doubted it for some obscure reason. He pulled at his ragged moustache a moment. 'Is that so, now?' he repeated. And the final words followed him downstream after a considerable pause—the advice about the best shore on which to put his tent.

All this now suddenly flashed back upon Hyde's mind with a tinge of disappointment and annoyance, for when two experienced men agreed, their opinion was not to be lightly disregarded. He wished he had asked the storekeeper for more details. He looked about him, he reflected, he hesitated. His ideal camping-ground lay certainly on

the forbidden shore. What in the world, he wondered, could be the objection to it?

But the light was fading; he must decide quickly one way or the other. After staring at his unpacked dunnage, and the tent, already half erected, he made up his mind with a muttered expression that consigned both Morton and the storekeeper to less pleasant places. 'They must have *some* reason,' he growled to himself; 'fellows like that usually know what they're talking about. I guess I'd better shift over to the other side—for to-night, at any rate.'

He glanced across the water before actually reloading. No smoke rose from the Indian's shack. He had seen no sign of a canoe. The man, he decided, was away. Reluctantly, then, he left the good camping-ground and paddled across the lake, and half an hour later his tent was up, firewood collected, and two small trout were already caught for supper. But the bigger fish, he knew, lay waiting for him on the other side by the little outfall, and he fell asleep at length on his bed of balsam boughs, annoyed and disappointed, yet wondering how a mere sentence could have persuaded him so easily against his own better judgement. He slept like the dead; the sun was well up before he stirred.

But his morning mood was a very different one. The brilliant light, the peace, the intoxicating air, all this was too exhilarating for the mind to harbour foolish fancies, and he marvelled that he could have been so weak the night before. No hesitation lay in him anywhere. He struck camp immediately after breakfast, paddled back across the strip of

shining water, and quickly settled in upon the forbidden shore, as he now called it, with a contemptuous grin. And the more he saw of the spot, the better he liked it. There was plenty of wood, running water to drink, an open space about the tent, and there were no flies. The fishing, moreover, was magnificent. Morton's description was fully justified, and 'stiff with big fish' for once was not an exaggeration.

The useless hours of the early afternoon he passed dozing in the sun, or wandering through the underbrush beyond the camp. He found no sign of anything unusual. He bathed in a cool, deep pool; he revelled in the lonely little paradise. Lonely it certainly was, but the loneliness was part of its charm; the stillness, the peace, the isolation of this beautiful backwoods lake delighted him. The silence was divine. He was entirely satisfied.

After a brew of tea, he strolled toward evening along the shore, looking for the first sign of a rising fish. A faint ripple on the water, with the lengthening shadows, made good conditions. *Plop* followed *plop*, as the big fellows rose, snatched at their food, and vanished into the depths. He hurried back. Ten minutes later he had taken his rods and was gliding cautiously in the canoe through the quiet water.

So good was the sport, indeed, and so quickly did the big trout pile up in the bottom of the canoe, that despite the growing lateness, he found it hard to tear himself away. 'One more,' he said, 'and then I really will go.' He landed that 'one more,' and was in the act of taking it off the hook, when the deep silence of the evening was curiously dis-

turbed. He became abruptly aware that some one watched him. A pair of eyes, it seemed, were fixed upon him from some point in the surrounding shadows.

Thus, at least, he interpreted the odd disturbance in his happy mood; for thus he felt it. The feeling stole over him without the slightest warning. He was not alone. The slippery big trout dropped from his fingers. He sat motionless, and stared about him.

Nothing stirred; the ripple on the lake had died away; there was no wind; the forest lay a single purple mass of shadow; the yellow sky, fast fading, threw reflections that troubled the eye and made distances uncertain. But there was no sound, no movement; he saw no figure anywhere. Yet he knew that some one watched him, and a wave of unreasoning terror gripped him. The nose of the canoe was against the bank. In a moment, and instinctively, he shoved it off and paddled into deeper water. The watcher, it came to him also instinctively, was quite close to him upon that bank. But where? And who? Was it the Indian?

Here, in deeper water, and some twenty yards from the shore, he paused and strained both sight and hearing to find some possible clue. He felt half ashamed, now that the first strange feeling passed a little. But the certainty remained. Absurd as it was, he felt positive that some one watched him with concentrated and intent regard. Every fibre in his being told him so; and though he could discover no figure, no new outline on the shore, he could even have sworn in which clump of willow

bushes the hidden person crouched and stared. His attention seemed drawn to that particular clump.

The water dripped slowly from his paddle, now lying across the thwarts. There was no other sound. The canvas of his tent gleamed dimly. A star or two were out. He waited. Nothing happened.

Then, as suddenly as it had come, the feeling passed, and he knew that the person who had been watching him intently had gone. It was as if a current had been turned off; the normal world flowed back; the landscape emptied as if some one had left a room. The disagreeable feeling left him at the same time, so that he instantly turned the canoe in to the shore again, landed, and, paddle in hand, went over to examine the clump of willows he had singled out as the place of concealment. There was no one there, of course, nor any trace of recent human occupancy. No leaves, no branches stirred, nor was a single twig displaced; his keen and practised sight detected no sign of tracks upon the ground. Yet, for all that, he felt positive that a little time ago some one had crouched among these very leaves and watched him. He remained absolutely convinced of it. The watcher, whether Indian hunter, stray lumberman, or wandering half-breed, had now withdrawn, a search was useless, and dusk was falling. He returned to his little camp, more disturbed perhaps than he cared to acknowledge. He cooked his supper, hung up his catch on a string, so that no prowling animal could get at it during the night, and prepared to make himself comfortable until bedtime. Unconsciously,

he built a bigger fire than usual, and found himself peering over his pipe into the deep shadows beyond the firelight, straining his ears to catch the slightest sound. He remained generally on the alert in a way that was new to him.

A man under such conditions and in such a place need not know discomfort until the sense of loneliness strikes him as too vivid a reality. Loneliness in a backwoods camp brings charm, pleasure, and a happy sense of calm until, and unless, it comes too near. It should remain an ingredient only among other conditions; it should not be directly, vividly noticed. Once it has crept within short range, however, it may easily cross the narrow line between comfort and discomfort, and darkness is an undesirable time for the transition. A curious dread may easily follow—the dread lest the loneliness suddenly be disturbed, and the solitary human feel himself open to attack.

For Hyde, now, this transition had been already accomplished; the too intimate sense of his loneliness had shifted abruptly into the worst condition of no longer being quite alone. It was an awkward moment, and the hotel clerk realized his position exactly. He did not quite like it. He sat there, with his back to the blazing logs, a very visible object in the light, while all about him the darkness of the forest lay like an impenetrable wall. He could not see a yard beyond the small circle of his camp-fire; the silence about him was like the silence of the dead. No leaf rustled, no wave lapped; he himself sat motionless as a log.

Then again he became suddenly aware that the person who watched him had returned, and that

same intent and concentrated gaze as before was fixed upon him where he lay. There was no warning; he heard no stealthy tread or snapping of dry twigs, yet the owner of those steady eyes was very close to him, probably not a dozen feet away. This sense of proximity was overwhelming.

It is unquestionable that a shiver ran down his spine. This time, moreover, he felt positive that the man crouched just beyond the firelight, the distance he himself could see being nicely calculated, and straight in front of him. For some minutes he sat without stirring a single muscle, yet with each muscle ready and alert, straining his eyes in vain to pierce the darkness, but only succeeding in dazzling his sight with the reflected light. Then, as he shifted his position slowly, cautiously, to obtain another angle of vision, his heart gave two big thumps against his ribs and the hair seemed to rise on his scalp with the sense of cold that gave him goose-flesh. In the darkness facing him he saw two small and greenish circles that were certainly a pair of eyes, yet not the eyes of an Indian hunter, or of any human being. It was a pair of animal eyes that stared so fixedly at him out of the night. And this certainly had an immediate and natural effect upon him:

For, at the menace of those eyes, the fears of millions of long dead hunters since the dawn of time woke in him. Hotel clerk though he was, heredity surged through him in an automatic wave of instinct. His hand groped for a weapon. His fingers fell on the iron head of his small camp axe, and at once he was himself again. Confidence returned; the vague, superstitious dread was gone.

This was a bear or wolf that smelt his catch and came to steal it. With beings of that sort he knew instinctively how to deal, yet admitting, by this very instinct, that his original dread had been of quite another kind.

'I'll damned quick find out what it is,' he exclaimed aloud, and snatching a burning brand from the fire, he hurled it with good aim straight at the eyes of the beast before him.

The bit of pitch-pine fell in a shower of sparks that lit the dry grass this side of the animal, flared up a moment, then died quickly down again. But in that instant of bright illumination he saw clearly what his unwelcome visitor was. A big timber wolf sat on its hindquarters, staring steadily at him through the firelight. He saw its legs and shoulders, he saw its hair, he saw also the big hemlock trunks lit up behind it, and the willow scrub on each side. It formed a vivid, clear-cut picture shown in clear detail by the momentary blaze. To his amazement, however, the wolf did not turn and bolt away from the burning log, but withdrew a few yards only, and sat there again on its haunches, staring, staring as before. Heavens, how it stared! He 'shoo-ed' it, but without effect; it did not budge. He did not waste another good log on it, for his fear was dissipated now; a timber wolf was a timber wolf, and it might sit there as long as it pleased, provided it did not try to steal his catch. No alarm was in him any more. He knew that wolves were harmless in the summer and autumn, and even when 'packed' in winter, they would attack a man only when suffering desperate hunger. So he lay and watched the beast, threw bits of stick in its

direction, even talked to it, wondering only that it never moved. 'You can stay there for ever, if you like,' he remarked to it aloud, 'for you cannot get at my fish, and the rest of the grub I shall take into the tent with me!

The creature blinked his bright green eyes, but made no move.

Why then, if his fear was gone, did he think of certain things as he rolled himself in the Hudson Bay blankets before going to sleep? The immobility of the animal was strange, its refusal to turn and bolt was still stranger. Never before had he known a wild creature that was not afraid of fire. Why did it sit and watch him, as with purpose in its gleaming eyes? How had he felt its presence earlier and instantly? A timber wolf, especially a solitary wolf, was a timid thing, yet this one feared neither man nor fire. Now, as he lay there wrapped in his blankets inside the cosy tent, it sat outside beneath the stars, beside the fading embers, the wind chilly in its fur, the ground cooling beneath its planted paws, watching him, steadily watching him, perhaps until the dawn.

It was unusual, it was strange. Having neither imagination nor tradition, he called upon no store of racial visions. Matter of fact, a hotel clerk on a fishing holiday, he lay there in his blankets, merely wondering and puzzled. A timber wolf was a timber wolf and nothing more. Yet this timber wolf—the idea haunted him—was different. In a word, the deeper part of his original uneasiness remained. He tossed about, he shivered sometimes in his broken sleep; he did not go out to see, but he woke early and unrefreshed.

Again with the sunshine and the morning wind, however, the incident of the night before was forgotten, almost unreal. His hunting zeal was uppermost. The tea and fish were delicious, his pipe had never tasted so good, the glory of this lonely lake amid primeval forests went to his head a little; he was a hunter before the Lord, and nothing else. He tried the edge of the lake, and in the excitement of playing a big fish, knew suddenly that *it*, the wolf, was there. He paused with the rod, exactly as if it struck. He looked about him, he looked in a definite direction. The brilliant sunshine made every smallest detail clear and sharp—boulders of granite, burned stems, crimson sumach, pebbles along the shore in neat, separate detail—without revealing where the watcher hid. Then, his sight wandering farther inshore among the tangled undergrowth, he suddenly picked up the familiar, half-expected outline. The wolf was lying behind a granite boulder, so that only the head, the muzzle, and the eyes were visible. It merged in its background. Had he not known it was a wolf, he could never have separated it from the landscape. The eyes shone in the sunlight.

There it lay. He looked straight at it. Their eyes, in fact, actually met full and square. 'Great Scott!' he exclaimed aloud, 'why, it's like looking at a human being!'

From that moment, unwittingly, he established a singular personal relation with the beast. And what followed confirmed this undesirable impression, for the animal rose instantly and came down in leisurely fashion to the shore, where it stood looking back at him. It stood and stared into his eyes

like some great wild dog, so that he was aware of a new and almost incredible sensation—that it courted recognition.

‘Well! well!’ he exclaimed again, relieving his feelings by addressing it aloud, ‘if this doesn’t beat everything I ever saw! What d’you want, anyway?’

He examined it now more carefully. He had never seen a wolf so big before; it was a tremendous beast, a nasty customer to tackle, he reflected, if it ever came to that. It stood there absolutely fearless and full of confidence. In the clear sunlight he took in every detail of it—a huge, shaggy lean-flanked timber wolf, its wicked eyes staring straight into his own, almost with a kind of purpose in them. He saw its great jaws, its teeth, and its tongue hung out, dropping saliva a little. And yet the idea of its savagery, its fierceness, was very little in him.

He was amazed and puzzled beyond belief. He wished the Indian would come back. He did not understand this strange behaviour in an animal. Its eyes, the odd expression in them, gave him a queer, unusual, difficult feeling. Had his nerves gone wrong, he almost wondered.

The beast stood on the shore and looked at him. He wished for the first time that he had brought a rifle. With a resounding smack he brought his paddle down flat upon the water, using all his strength, till the echoes rang as from a pistol-shot that was audible from one end of the lake to the other. The wolf never stirred. He shouted, but the beast remained unmoved. He blinked his eyes, speaking as to a dog, a domestic animal, a creature

accustomed to human ways. It blinked its eyes in return.

At length, increasing his distance from the shore, he continued fishing, and the excitement of the marvellous sport held his attention—his surface attention, at any rate. At times he almost forgot the attendant beast; yet whenever he looked up, he saw it there. And worse; when he slowly paddled home again, he observed it trotting along the shore as though to keep him company. Crossing a little bay, he spurted, hoping to reach the other point before his undesired and undesirable attendant. Instantly the brute broke into that rapid, tireless lope that, except on ice, can run down anything on four legs in the woods. When he reached the distant point, the wolf was waiting for him. He raised his paddle from the water, pausing a moment for reflection; for this very close attention—there were dusk and night yet to come—he certainly did not relish. His camp was near; he had to land; he felt uncomfortable even in the sunshine of broad day, when, to his keen relief, about half a mile from the tent, he saw the creature suddenly stop and sit down in the open. He waited a moment, then paddled on. It did not follow. There was no attempt to move; it merely sat and watched him. After a few hundred yards, he looked back. It was still sitting where he left it. And the absurd, yet significant, feeling came to him that the beast divined his thought, his anxiety, his dread, and was now showing him, as well as it could, that it entertained no hostile feeling and did not meditate attack.

He turned the canoe toward the shore; he landed;

he cooked his supper in the dusk; the animal made no sign. Not far away it certainly lay and watched, but it did not advance. And to Hyde, observant now in a new way, came one sharp, vivid reminder of the strange atmosphere into which his commonplace personality had strayed: he suddenly recalled that his relations with the beast, already established, had progressed distinctly a stage further. This startled him, yet without the accompanying alarm he must certainly have felt twenty-four hours before. He had an understanding with the wolf. He was aware of friendly thoughts towards it. He even went so far as to set out a few big fish on the spot where he had first seen it sitting the previous night. 'If he comes,' he thought, 'he is welcome to them. I've got plenty, anyway.' He thought of it now as 'he.'

Yet the wolf made no appearance until he was in the act of entering his tent a good deal later. It was close on ten o'clock, whereas nine was his hour, and late at that, for turning in. He had, therefore, unconsciously been waiting for him. Then, as he was closing the flap, he saw the eyes close to where he had placed the fish. He waited, hiding himself, and expecting to hear sounds of munching jaws; but all was silence. Only the eyes glowed steadily out of the background of pitch darkness. He closed the flap. He had no slightest fear. In ten minutes he was sound asleep.

He could not have slept very long, for when he woke up he could see the shine of a faint red light through the canvas, and the fire had not died down completely. He rose and cautiously peeped out. The air was very cold; he saw his breath. But he

also saw the wolf, for it had come in, and was sitting by the dying embers, not two yards away from where he crouched behind the flap. And this time, at these very close quarters, there was something in the attitude of the big wild thing that caught his attention with a vivid thrill of startled surprise and a sudden shock of cold that held him spellbound. He stared, unable to believe his eyes; for the wolf's attitude conveyed to him something familiar that at first he was unable to explain. Its pose reached him in the terms of another thing with which he was entirely at home. What was it? Did his senses betray him? Was he still asleep and dreaming?

Then, suddenly, with a start of uncanny recognition, he knew. Its attitude was that of a dog. Having found the clue, his mind then made an awful leap. For it was, after all, no dog its appearance aped, but something nearer to himself, and more familiar still. Good heavens! It sat there with the pose, the attitude, the gesture in repose of something almost human. And then, with a second shock of biting wonder, it came to him like a revelation. The wolf sat beside that camp-fire as a man might sit.

Before he could weigh his extraordinary discovery, before he could examine it in detail or with care, the animal, sitting in this ghastly fashion, seemed to feel his eyes fixed on it. It slowly turned and looked him in the face, and for the first time Hyde felt a full-blooded superstitious fear flood through his entire being. He seemed transfixed with that nameless terror that is said to attack human beings who suddenly face the dead, finding

themselves bereft of speech and movement. This moment of paralysis certainly occurred. Its passing, however, was as singular as its advent. For almost at once he was aware of something beyond and above this mockery of human attitude and pose, something that ran along unaccustomed nerves and reached his feeling, even perhaps his heart. The revulsion was extraordinary, its result still more extraordinary and unexpected. Yet the fact remains. He was aware of another thing that had the effect of stilling his terror as soon as it was born. He was aware of appeal, silent, half-expressed, yet vastly pathetic. He saw in the savage eyes a beseeching, even a yearning, expression that changed his mood as by magic from dread to natural sympathy. The great gray brute, symbol of cruel ferocity, sat there beside his dying fire and appealed for help.

The gulf betwixt animal and human seemed in that instant bridged. It was, of course, incredible. Hyde, sleep still possibly clinging to his inner being with the shades and half shapes of dream yet about his soul, acknowledged, how he knew not, the amazing fact. He found himself nodding to the brute in half consent, and instantly, without more ado, the lean gray shape rose like a wraith and trotted off swiftly, but with stealthy tread, into the background of the night.

When Hyde woke in the morning his first impression was that he must have dreamed the entire incident. His practical nature asserted itself. There was a bite in the fresh autumn air; the bright sun allowed no half lights anywhere; he felt brisk in mind and body. Reviewing what had happened,

he came to the conclusion that it was utterly vain to speculate; no possible explanation of the animal's behaviour occurred to him: he was dealing with something entirely outside his experience. His fear, however, had completely left him. The odd sense of friendliness remained. The beast had a definite purpose, and he himself was included in that purpose. His sympathy held good.

But with the sympathy there was also an intense curiosity. 'If it shows itself again,' he told himself, 'I'll go up close and find out what it wants.' The fish laid out the night before had not been touched.

It must have been a full hour after breakfast when he next saw the brute; it was standing on the edge of the clearing, looking at him in the way now become familiar. Hyde immediately picked up his axe and advanced toward it boldly, keeping his eyes fixed straight upon its own. There was nervousness in him, but kept well under; nothing betrayed it; step by step he drew nearer until some ten yards separated them. The wolf had not stirred a muscle as yet. Its jaws hung open, its eyes observed him intently; it allowed him to approach without a sign of what its mood might be. Then, with these ten yards between them, it turned abruptly and moved slowly off, looking back first over one shoulder and then over the other, exactly as a dog might do, to see if he was following.

A singular journey it was they then made together, animal and man. The trees surrounded them at once, for they left the lake behind them, entering the tangled bush beyond. The beast, Hyde noticed, obviously picked the easiest track for him to follow; for obstacles that meant nothing

to the four-legged expert, yet were difficult for a man, were carefully avoided with an almost uncanny skill, while yet the general direction was accurately kept. Occasionally there were windfalls to be surmounted; but though the wolf bounded over these with ease, it was always waiting for the man on the other side after he had laboriously climbed over. Deeper and deeper into the heart of the lonely forest they penetrated in this singular fashion, cutting across the arc of the lake's crescent, it seemed to Hyde; for after two miles or so, he recognised the big rocky bluff that overhung the water at its northern end. This outstanding bluff he had seen from his camp, one side of it falling sheer into the water; it was probably the spot, he imagined, where the Indians held their medicine-making ceremonies, for it stood out in isolated fashion, and its top formed a private plateau not easy of access. And it was here, close to a big spruce at the foot of the bluff upon the forest side, that the wolf stopped suddenly and for the first time since its appearance gave audible expression to its feelings. It sat down on its haunches, lifted its muzzle with open jaws, and gave vent to a subdued and long-drawn howl that was more like the wail of a dog than the fierce barking cry associated with a wolf.

By this time Hyde had lost not only fear, but caution too; nor, oddly enough, did this warning howl revive a sign of unwelcome emotion in him. In that curious sound he detected the same message that the eyes conveyed—appeal for help. He paused, nevertheless, a little startled, and while the wolf sat waiting for him, he looked about him

quickly. There was young timber here; it had once been a small clearing, evidently. Axe and fire had done their work, but there was evidence to an experienced eye that it was Indians and not white men who had once been busy here. Some part of the medicine ritual, doubtless, took place in the little clearing, thought the man, as he advanced again towards his patient leader. The end of their queer journey, he felt, was close at hand.

He had not taken two steps before the animal got up and moved very slowly in the direction of some low bushes that formed a clump just beyond. It entered these, first looking back to make sure that its companion watched. The bushes hid it; a moment later it emerged again. Twice it performed this pantomime, each time, as it reappeared, standing still and staring at the man with as distinct an expression of appeal in the eyes as an animal may compass, probably. Its excitement, meanwhile, certainly increased, and this excitement was, with equal certainty, communicated to the man. Hyde made up his mind quickly. Gripping his axe tightly, and ready to use it at the first hint of malice, he moved slowly nearer to the bushes, wondering with something of a tremor what would happen.

If he expected to be startled, his expectation was at once fulfilled; but it was the behaviour of the beast that made him jump. It positively frisked about him like a happy dog. It frisked for joy. Its excitement was intense, yet from its open mouth no sound was audible. With a sudden leap, then, it bounded past him into the clump of bushes, against whose very edge he stood, and began scraping vigorously at the ground. Hyde stood and

stared, amazement and interest now banishing all his nervousness, even when the beast, in its violent scraping, actually touched his body with its own. He had, perhaps, the feeling that he was in a dream, one of those fantastic dreams in which things may happen without involving an adequate surprise; for otherwise the manner of scraping and scratching at the ground must have seemed an impossible phenomenon. No wolf, no dog certainly, used its paws in the way those paws were working. Hyde had the odd, distressing sensation that it was hands, not paws, he watched. And yet, somehow, the natural, adequate surprise he should have felt was absent. The strange action seemed not entirely unnatural. In his heart some deep hidden spring of sympathy and pity stirred instead. He was aware of pathos.

The wolf stopped in its task and looked up into his face. Hyde acted without hesitation then. Afterwards he was wholly at a loss to explain his own conduct. It seemed he knew what to do, divined what was asked, expected of him. Between his mind and the dumb desire yearning through the savage animal there was intelligent and intelligible communication. He cut a stake and sharpened it, for the stones would blunt his axe-edge. He entered the clump of bushes to complete the digging his four-legged companion had begun. And while he worked, though he did not forget the close proximity of the wolf, he paid no attention to it; often his back was turned as he stooped over the laborious clearing away of the hard earth; no uneasiness or sense of danger was in him any more. The wolf sat outside the clump and watched the

operations. Its concentrated attention, its patience, its intense eagerness, the gentleness and docility of the gray, fierce, and probably hungry brute, its obvious pleasure and satisfaction, too, at having won the human to its mysterious purpose—these were colours in the strange picture that Hyde thought of later when dealing with the human herd in his hotel again. At the moment he was aware chiefly of pathos and affection. The whole business was, of course, not to be believed, but that discovery came later, too, when telling it to others.

The digging continued for fully half an hour before his labour was rewarded by the discovery of a small whitish object. He picked it up and examined it—the finger-bone of a man. Other discoveries then followed quickly and in quantity. The *cache* was laid bare. He collected nearly the complete skeleton. The skull, however, he found last, and might not have found at all but for the guidance of his strangely alert companion. It lay some few yards away from the central hole now dug, and the wolf stood nuzzling the ground with its nose before Hyde understood that he was meant to dig exactly in that spot for it. Between the beast's very paws his stake struck hard upon it. He scraped the earth from the bone and examined it carefully. It was perfect, save for the fact that some wild animal had gnawed it, the teeth-marks being still plainly visible. Close beside it lay the rusty iron head of a tomahawk. This and the smallness of the bones confirmed him in his judgement that it was the skeleton not of a white man, but of an Indian.

During the excitement of the discovery of the bones one by one, and finally of the skull, but more,

especially, during the period of intense interest while Hyde was examining them, he had paid little if any attention to the wolf. He was aware that it sat and watched him, never moving its keen eyes for a single moment from the actual operations, but sign or movement it made none at all. He knew that it was pleased and satisfied, he knew also that he had now fulfilled its purpose in a great measure. The further intuition that now came to him, derived, he felt positive, from his companion's dumb desire, was perhaps the cream of the entire experience to him. Gathering the bones together in his coat, he carried them, together with the tomahawk, to the foot of the big spruce where the animal had first stopped. His leg actually touched the creature's muzzle as he passed. It turned its head to watch, but did not follow, nor did it move a muscle while he prepared the platform of boughs upon which he then laid the poor worn bones of an Indian who had been killed, doubtless, in sudden attack or ambush, and to whose remains had been denied the last grace of proper tribal burial. He wrapped the bones in bark; he laid the tomahawk beside the skull; he lit the circular fire round the pyre, and the blue smoke rose upward into the clear bright sunshine of the Canadian autumn morning till it was lost among the mighty trees far overhead.

In the moment before actually lighting the little fire he had turned to note what his companion did. It sat five yards away, he saw, gazing intently, and one of its front paws was raised a little from the ground. It made no sign of any kind. He finished the work, becoming so absorbed in it that he had eyes for nothing but the tending and guarding of

his careful ceremonial fire. It was only when the platform of boughs collapsed, laying their charred burden gently on the fragrant earth among the soft wood ashes, that he turned again, as though to show the wolf what he had done, and seek, perhaps, some look of satisfaction in its curiously expressive eyes. But the place he searched was empty; the wolf had gone.

He did not see it again; it gave no sign of its presence anywhere; he was not watched. He fished as before, wandered through the bush about his camp, sat smoking round his fire after dark, and slept peacefully in his cosy little tent. He was not disturbed. No howl was ever audible in the distant forest, no twig snapped beneath a stealthy tread, he saw no eyes. The wolf that behaved like a man had gone for ever.

It was the day before he left that Hyde, noticing smoke rising from the shack across the lake, paddled over to exchange a word or two with the Indian, who had evidently now returned. The Redskin came down to meet him as he landed, but it was soon plain that he spoke very little English. He emitted the familiar grunts at first; then bit by bit Hyde stirred his limited vocabulary into action. The net result, however, was slight enough, though it was certainly direct:

'You camp there?' the man asked, pointing to the other side.

'Yes.'

'Wolf come?'

'Yes.'

'You see wolf?'

'Yes.'

The Indian stared at him fixedly a moment, a keen, wondering look upon his coppery, creased face.

'You 'fraid wolf?' he asked after a moment's pause.

'No,' replied Hyde, truthfully. He knew it was useless to ask questions of his own, though he was eager for information. The other would have told him nothing. It was sheer luck that the man had touched on the subject at all, and Hyde realised that his own best rôle was merely to answer, but to ask no questions. Then, suddenly, the Indian became comparatively voluble. There was awe in his voice and manner.

'Him no wolf. Him big medicine wolf. Him spirit wolf.'

Whereupon he drank the tea the other had brewed for him, closed his lips tightly, and said no more. His outline was discernible on the shore, rigid and motionless, an hour later, when Hyde's canoe turned the corner of the lake three miles away, and landed to make the portages up the first rapid of his homeward stream.

It was Morton who, after some persuasion, supplied further details of what he called the legend. Some hundred years before, the tribe that lived in the territory beyond the lake began their annual medicine-making ceremonies on the big rocky bluff at the northern end; but no medicine could be made. The spirits, declared the chief medicine man, would not answer. They were offended. An investigation followed. It was discovered that a young brave had recently killed a wolf, a thing strictly forbidden, since the wolf was the totem animal of the tribe. To make matters worse, the

name of the guilty man was Running Wolf. The offence being unpardonable, the man was cursed and driven from the tribe:

'Go out. Wander alone among the woods, and if we see you we slay you. Your bones shall be scattered in the forest, and your spirit shall not enter the Happy Hunting Grounds till one of another race shall find and bury them.'

'Which meant,' explained Morton laconically, his only comment on the story, 'probably for ever.'

VENUS

By MAURICE BARING

I

JOHN FLETCHER was an overworked minor official in a Government office. He lived a lonely life, and had done so ever since he had been a boy. At school he had mixed little with his fellow school-boys, and he took no interest in the things that interested them, that is to say, games. On the other hand, although he was what is called 'good at work,' and did his lessons with facility and ease, he was not a literary boy, and did not care for books. He was drawn towards machinery of all kinds, and spent his spare time in dabbling in scientific experiments or in watching trains go by on the Great Western line. Once he blew off his eyebrows while making some experiment with explosive chemicals; his hands were always smudged with dark, mysterious stains, and his room was like that of a mediæval alchemist, littered with retorts, bottles, and test-glasses. Before leaving school he invented a flying machine (heavier than air), and an unsuccessful attempt to start it on the high road caused him to be the victim of much chaff and ridicule.

When he left school he went to Oxford. His life there was as lonely as it had been at school. The dirty, untidy, ink-stained, and chemical-stained little boy grew up into a tall, lank, slovenly-dressed man, who kept entirely to himself, not because he

cherished any dislike or disdain for his fellow-creatures, but because he seemed to be entirely absorbed in his own thoughts and isolated from the world by a barrier of dreams.

He did well at Oxford, and when he went down he passed high into the Civil Service and became a clerk in a Government office. There he kept as much to himself as ever. He did his work rapidly and well, for this man, who seemed so slovenly in his person, had an accurate mind, and was what was called a good clerk, although his incurable absent-mindedness once or twice caused him to forget certain matters of importance.

His fellow clerks treated him as a crank and as a joke, but none of them, try as they would, could get to know him or win his confidence. They used to wonder what Fletcher did with his spare time, what were his pursuits, what were his hobbies, if he had any. They suspected that Fletcher had some hobby of an engrossing kind, since in everyday life he conveyed the impression of a man who is walking in his sleep, who acts mechanically and automatically. Somewhere else, they thought, in some other circumstances, he must surely wake up and take a living interest in somebody or in something.

Yet had they followed him home to his small room in Canterbury-mansions they would have been astonished. For when he returned from the office after a hard day's work he would do nothing more engrossing than slowly to turn over the leaves of a book in which there were elaborate drawings and diagrams of locomotives and other kinds of engines. And on Sunday he would take a train to

one of the large junctions and spend the whole day in watching express trains go past, and in the evening would return again to London.

One day after he had returned from the office somewhat earlier than usual, he was telephoned for. He had no telephone in his own room, but he could use a public telephone which was attached to the building. He went into the small box, but found on reaching the telephone that he had been cut off by the exchange. He imagined that he had been rung up by the office, so he asked to be given their number. As he did so his eye caught an advertisement which was hung just over the telephone. It was an elaborate design in black and white, pointing out the merits of a particular kind of soap called the Venus: a classical lady, holding a looking-glass in one hand and a cake of this invaluable soap in the other, was standing in a sphere surrounded by pointed rays, which was no doubt intended to represent the most brilliant of the planets.

Fletcher sat down on the stool and took the receiver in his hand. As he did so he had for one second the impression that the floor underneath him gave way and that he was falling down a precipice. But before he had time to realise what was happening the sensation of falling left him; he shook himself as though he had been asleep, and for one moment a faint recollection as though of the dreams of the night twinkled in his mind, and vanished beyond all possibility of recall. He said to himself that he had had a long and curious dream, and he knew that it was too late to remember what it had been about. Then he opened his eyes wide and looked round him.

He was standing on the slope of a hill. At his feet there was a kind of green moss, very soft to tread on. It was sprinkled here and there with light red, wax-like flowers such as he had never seen before. He was standing in an open space; beneath him there was a plain covered with what seemed to be gigantic mushrooms, much taller than a man. Above him rose a mass of vegetation, and over all this was a dense, heavy, streaming cloud faintly glimmering with a white, silvery light which seemed to be beyond it.

He walked towards the vegetation, and soon found himself in the middle of a wood, or rather of a jungle. Tangled plants grew on every side; large hanging creepers with great blue flowers hung downwards. There was a profound stillness in this wood; there were no birds singing and he heard not the slightest rustle in the rich undergrowth. It was oppressively hot and the air was full of a pungent, aromatic sweetness. He felt as though he were in a hot-house full of gardenias and stephanotis. At the same time the atmosphere of the place was pleasant to him. It was neither strange nor disagreeable. He felt at home in this green, shimmering jungle and in this hot, aromatic twilight, as though he had lived there all his life.

He walked mechanically onwards as if he were going to a definite spot of which he knew. He walked fast, but in spite of the oppressive atmosphere and the thickness of the growth he grew neither hot nor out of breath; on the contrary, he took pleasure in the motion, and the stifling, sweet air seemed to invigorate him. He walked steadily on for over three hours, choosing his way nicely,

avoiding certain places and seeking others, following a definite path and making for a definite goal. During all this time the stillness continued unbroken, nor did he meet a single living thing, either bird or beast.

After he had been walking for what seemed to him several hours, the vegetation grew thinner, the jungle less dense, and from a more or less open space in it he seemed to discern what might have been a mountain entirely submerged in a multitude of heavy grey clouds. He sat down on the green stuff which was like grass and yet was not grass, at the edge of the open space whence he got this view, and quite naturally he picked from the boughs of an overhanging tree a large red, juicy fruit, and ate it. Then he said to himself, he knew not why, that he must not waste time, but must be moving on.

He took a path to the right of him and descended the sloping jungle with big, buoyant strides, almost running; he knew the way as though he had been down that path a thousand times. He knew that in a few moments he would reach a whole hanging garden of red flowers, and he knew that when he had reached this he must again turn to the right. It was as he thought: the red flowers soon came to view. He turned sharply, and then through the thinning greenery he caught sight of an open plain where more mushrooms grew. But the plain was as yet a great way off, and the mushrooms seemed quite small.

'I shall get there in time,' he said to himself, and walked steadily on, looking neither to the right nor to the left. It was evening by the time he reached

the edge of the plain: everything was growing dark. The endless vapours and the high banks of cloud in which the whole of this world was sunk grew dimmer and dimmer. In front of him was an empty level space, and about two miles further on the huge mushrooms stood out, tall and wide like the monuments of some prehistoric age. And underneath them on the soft carpet there seemed to move a myriad vague and shadowy forms.

'I shall get there in time,' he thought. He walked for another half hour, and by this time the tall mushrooms were quite close to him, and he could see moving underneath them, distinctly now, green, living creatures like huge caterpillars, with glowing eyes. They moved slowly and did not seem to interfere with each other in any way. Further off, and beyond them, there was a broad and endless plain of high green stalks like ears of green wheat or millet, only taller and thinner.

He ran on, and now at his very feet, right in front of him, the green caterpillars were moving. They were as big as leopards. As he drew nearer they seemed to make way for him, and to gather themselves into groups under the thick stems of the mushrooms. He walked along the pathway they made for him, under the shadow of the broad, sunshade-like roofs of these gigantic growths. It was almost dark now, yet he had no doubt or difficulty as to finding his way. He was making for the green plain beyond. The ground was dense with caterpillars; they were as plentiful as ants in an ant's nest, and yet they never seemed to interfere with each other or with him; they instinctively made way for him, nor did they appear to notice

him in any way. He felt neither surprise nor wonder at their presence.

It grew quite dark; the only lights which were in this world came from the twinkling eyes of the moving figures, which shone like little stars. The night was no whit cooler than the day. The atmosphere was as steamy, as dense and as aromatic as before. He walked on and on, feeling no trace of fatigue or hunger, and every now and then he said to himself: 'I shall be there in time.' The plain was flat and level, and covered the whole way with the mushrooms, whose roofs met and shut out from him the sight of the dark sky.

At last he came to the end of the plain of mushrooms and reached the high green stalks he had been making for. Beyond the dark clouds a silver glimmer had begun once more to show itself. 'I am just in time,' he said to himself, 'the night is over, the sun is rising.'

At that moment there was a great whirr in the air, and from out of the green stalks rose a flight of millions and millions of enormous broad-winged butterflies of every hue and description—silver, gold, purple, brown and blue. Some with dark and velvety wings like the Purple Emperor, or the Red Admiral, others diaphanous and iridescent as dragonflies. Others again like vast soft and silvery moths. They rose from every part of that green plain of stalks, they filled the sky, and then soared upwards and disappeared into the silvery cloudland.

Fletcher was about to leap forward when he heard a voice in his ear saying—

'Are you 6493 Victoria? You are talking to the Home Office.'

II

As soon as Fletcher heard the voice of the office messenger through the telephone he instantly realized his surroundings, and the strange experience he had just gone through, which had seemed so long and which in reality had been so brief, left little more impression on him than that which remains with a man who has been immersed in a brown study or who has been staring at something, say a poster in the street, and has not noticed the passage of time.

The next day he returned to his work at the office, and his fellow-clerks, during the whole of the next week, noticed that he was more zealous and more painstaking than ever. On the other hand, his periodical fits of abstraction grew more frequent and more pronounced. On one occasion he took a paper to the head of the department for signature, and after it had been signed, instead of removing it from the table, he remained staring in front of him, and it was not until the head of the department had called him three times loudly by name that he took any notice and regained possession of his faculties. As these fits of absent-mindedness grew to be somewhat severely commented on, he consulted a doctor, who told him that what he needed was change of air, and advised him to spend his Sundays at Brighton or at some other bracing and exhilarating spot. Fletcher did not take the doctor's advice, but continued spending his spare time as he did before, that is to say, in going to some big junction and watching the express trains go by all day long.

One day while he was thus employed—it was

Sunday, in August of 19—, when the Egyptian Exhibition was attracting great crowds of visitors—and sitting, as was his habit, on a bench on the centre platform of Slough station, he noticed an Indian pacing up and down the platform, who every now and then stopped and regarded him with peculiar interest, hesitating as though he wished to speak to him. Presently the Indian came and sat down on the same bench, and after having sat there in silence for some minutes he at last made a remark about the heat.

‘Yes,’ said Fletcher, ‘it is trying, especially for people like myself, who have to remain in London during these months.’

‘You are in an office, no doubt,’ said the Indian.

‘Yes,’ said Fletcher.

‘And you are no doubt hard worked.’

‘Our hours are not long,’ Fletcher replied, ‘and I should not complain of overwork if I did not happen to suffer from—well, I don’t know what it is, but I suppose they would call it nerves.’

‘Yes,’ said the Indian, ‘I could see that by your eyes.’

‘I am a prey to sudden fits of abstraction,’ said Fletcher, ‘they are growing upon me. Sometimes in the office I forget where I am altogether for a space of about two or three minutes; people are beginning to notice it and to talk about it. I have been to a doctor, and he said I needed change of air. I shall have my leave in about a month’s time, and then perhaps I shall get some change of air, but I doubt if it will do me any good. But these fits are annoying, and once something quite uncanny seemed to happen to me.’

The Indian showed great interest and asked for further details concerning this strange experience, and Fletcher told him all that he could recall—for the memory of it was already dimmed—of what had happened when he had telephoned that night.

The Indian was thoughtful for a while after hearing this tale. At last he said: 'I am not a doctor, I am not even what you call a quack doctor—I am a mere conjurer, and I gain my living by conjuring tricks and fortune-telling at the Exhibition which is going on in London. But although I am a poor man and an ignorant man, I have an inkling, a few sparks in me of ancient knowledge, and I know what is the matter with you.'

'What is it?' asked Fletcher.

'You have the power, or something has the power,' said the Indian, 'of detaching you from your actual body, and your astral body has been into another planet. By your description I think it must be the planet Venus. It may happen to you again, and for a longer period—for a very much longer period.'

'Is there anything I can do to prevent it?' asked Fletcher.

'Nothing,' said the Indian. 'You can try change of air if you like, but,' he said with a smile, 'I do not think it will do you much good.'

At that moment a train came in, and the Indian said good-bye and jumped into it.

On the next day, which was Monday, when Fletcher got to the office it was necessary for him to use the telephone with regard to some business. No sooner had he taken the receiver off the tele-

phone than he vividly recalled the minute details of the evening he had telephoned, when the strange experience had come to him. The advertisement of Venus Soap that had hung in the telephone box in his house appeared distinctly before him, and as he thought of that he once more experienced a falling sensation which lasted only a fraction of a second, and rubbing his eyes he awoke to find himself in the tepid atmosphere of a green and humid world.

This time he was not near the wood, but on the sea-shore. In front of him was a grey sea, smooth as oil and clouded with steaming vapours, and behind him the wide green plain stretched into a cloudy distance. He could discern, faint on the far-off horizon, the shadowy forms of the gigantic mushrooms which he knew, and on the level plain, which reached the sea beach, but not so far off as the mushrooms, he could plainly see the huge green caterpillars moving slowly and lazily in an endless herd. The sea was breaking on the sand with a faint moan. But almost at once he became aware of another sound, which came he knew not whence, and which was familiar to him. It was a low whistling noise, and it seemed to come from the sky.

At that moment Fletcher was seized by an unaccountable panic. He was afraid of something; he did not know what it was, but he knew, he felt absolutely certain, that some danger, no vague calamity, no distant misfortune, but some definite physical danger was hanging over him and quite close to him—something from which it would be necessary to run away, and to run fast in order to

save his life. And yet there was no sign of danger visible, for in front of him was the motionless oily sea, and behind him was the empty and silent plain. It was then he noticed that the caterpillars were fast disappearing, as if into the earth: he was too far off to make out how.

He began to run along the coast. He ran as fast as he could, but he dared not look round. He ran back from the coast along the plain, from which a white mist was rising. By this time every single caterpillar had disappeared. The whistling noise continued and grew louder.

At last he reached the wood and bounded on, trampling down long trailing grasses and tangled weeds through the thick, muggy gloom of those endless aisles of jungle. He came to a somewhat open space where there was the trunk of a tree larger than the others; it stood by itself and disappeared into the tangle of creepers above. He thought he would climb the tree, but the trunk was too wide, and his efforts failed. He stood by the tree trembling and panting with fear. He could not hear a sound, but he felt that the danger, whatever it was, was at hand.

It grew darker and darker. It was night in the forest. He stood paralysed with terror; he felt as though bound hand and foot, but there was nothing to be done except to wait until his invisible enemy should choose to inflict his will on him and achieve his doom. And yet the agony of this suspense was so terrible that he felt that if it lasted much longer something must inevitably break inside him . . . and just as he was thinking that eternity could not be so long as the moments he

was passing through, a blessed unconsciousness came over him. He woke from this state to find himself face to face with one of the office messengers, who said to him that he had been given his number two or three times but had taken no notice of it.

Fletcher executed his commission and then went upstairs to his office. His fellow-clerks at once asked what had happened to him, for he was looking white. He said that he had a headache and was not feeling quite himself, but made no further explanation.

This last experience changed the whole tenor of his life. When fits of abstraction had occurred to him before he had not troubled about them, and after his first strange experience he had felt only vaguely interested; but now it was a different matter. He was consumed with dread lest the thing should occur again. He did not want to get back to that green world and that oily sea; he did not want to hear the whistling noise, and to be pursued by an invisible enemy. So much did the dread of this weigh on him that he refused to go to the telephone lest the act of telephoning should set alight in his mind the train of associations and bring his thoughts back to his dreadful experience.

Shortly after this he went for leave, and following the doctor's advice he spent it by the sea. During all this time he was perfectly well, and was not once troubled by his curious fits. He returned to London in the autumn refreshed and well.

On the first day that he went to the office a friend of his telephoned to him. When he was told that the line was being held for him he hesitated, but at last he went down to the telephone office.

He remained away twenty minutes. Finally his prolonged absence was noticed, and he was sent for. He was found in the telephone room stiff and unconscious, having fallen forward on the telephone desk. His face was quite white, and his eyes wide open and glazed with an expression of piteous and harrowing horror. When they tried to revive him their efforts were in vain. A doctor was sent for, and he said that Fletcher had died of heart disease.

THE BUREAU D'ÉCHANGE DE MAUX

By LORD DUNSANY

I OFTEN think of the Bureau d'Échange de Maux and the wondrously evil old man that sate therein. It stood in a little street that there is in Paris, its doorway made of three brown beams of wood, the top one overlapping the others like the Greek letter *παι*, all the rest painted green, a house far lower and narrower than its neighbours and infinitely stranger, a thing to take one's fancy. And over the doorway on the old brown beam in faded yellow letters this legend ran, 'Bureau Universel d'Échange de Maux.'

I entered at once and accosted the listless man that lolled on a stool by his counter. I demanded the wherefore of his wonderful house, what evil wares he exchanged, with many other things that I wished to know, for curiosity led me: and indeed had it not I had gone at once from the shop, for there was so evil a look in that fattened man, in the hang of his fallen cheeks and his sinful eye, that you would have said he had had dealings with Hell and won the advantage by sheer wickedness.

Such a man was mine host, but above all the evil of him lay in his eyes, which lay so still, so apathetic, that you would have sworn that he was drugged or dead; like lizards motionless on a wall they lay, then suddenly they darted, and all his cunning flamed up and revealed itself in what one moment

before seemed no more than a sleepy and ordinary wicked old man. And this was the object and trade of that peculiar shop, the Bureau Universel d'Échange de Maux: you paid twenty francs, which the old man proceeded to take from me, for admission to the bureau, and then had the right to exchange any evil or misfortune with anyone on the premises for some evil misfortune that he 'could afford,' as the old man put it.

There were four or five men in the dingy ends of that low-ceilinged room who gesticulated and muttered softly in twos as men who make a bargain, and now and then more came in, and the eyes of the flabby owner of the house leaped up at them as they entered, seemed to know their errands at once and each one's peculiar need, and fell back again into somnolence, receiving his twenty francs in an almost lifeless hand and biting the coin as though in pure absence of mind.

'Some of my clients,' he told me. So amazing to me was the trade of this extraordinary shop that I engaged the old man in conversation, repulsive though he was, and from his garrulity I gathered these facts. He spoke in perfect English though his utterance was somewhat thick and heavy, no language seemed to come amiss to him. He had been in business a great many years, how many he would not say, and was far older than he looked. All kinds of people did business in his shop. What they exchanged with each other he did not care, except that it had to be evils; he was not empowered to carry on any other kind of business.

There was no evil, he told me, that was not negotiable there; no evil the old man knew had

ever been taken away in despair from his shop. A man might have to wait and come back again next day and next day and the day after, paying twenty francs each time, but the old man had the addresses of his clients and shrewdly knew their needs, and soon the right two met and eagerly changed their commodities. 'Commodities' was the old man's terrible word, said with a gruesome smack of his heavy lips, for he took a pride in his business and evils to him were goods.

I learned from him in ten minutes very much of human nature, more than I had ever learned from any other man; I learned from him that a man's own evil is to him the worst thing that there is or could be, and that an evil so unbalances all men's minds that they always seek for extremes in that small grim shop. A woman that had no children had exchanged with an impoverished half-maddened creature with twelve. On one occasion a man had exchanged wisdom for folly.

'Why on earth did he do that?' I said.

'None of my business,' the old man answered in his heavy indolent way. He merely took his twenty francs from each and ratified the agreement in the little room at the back opening out of the shop where his clients do business. Apparently the man that had parted with wisdom had left the shop upon the tips of his toes with a happy though foolish expression all over his face, but the other went thoughtfully away wearing a troubled and very puzzled look. Almost always it seemed they did business in opposite evils.

But the thing that puzzled me most in all my talks with that unwieldy man, the thing that puzzles

me still, is that none that had once done business in that shop ever returned again; a man might come day after day for many weeks, but once do business and he never returned; so much the old man told me, but, when I asked him why, he only muttered that he did not know.

It was to discover the wherefore of this strange thing, and for no other reason at all, that I determined myself to do business sooner or later in the little room at the back of that mysterious shop. I determined to exchange some very trivial evil for some evil equally slight, to seek for myself an advantage so very small as scarcely to give Fate as it were a grip; for I deeply distrusted these bargains, knowing well that man has never yet benefited by the marvellous and that the more miraculous his advantage appears to be the more securely and tightly do the gods or the witches catch him. In a few days more I was going back to England and I was beginning to fear that I should be sea-sick: this fear of seasickness, not the actual malady but only the mere fear of it, I decided to exchange for a suitably little evil. I did not know with whom I should be dealing, who in reality was the head of the firm (one never does when shopping), but I decided that neither Jew nor Devil could make very much on so small a bargain as that.

I told the old man my project, and he scoffed at the smallness of my commodity, trying to urge me on to some darker bargain, but could not move me from my purpose. And then he told me tales with a somewhat boastful air of the big business, the great bargains, that had passed through his hands. A man had once run in there to try and

exchange death; he had swallowed poison by accident and had only twelve hours to live. That sinister old man had been able to oblige him. A client was willing to exchange the commodity.

'But what did he give in exchange for death?' I said.

'Life,' said that grim old man with a furtive chuckle.

'It must have been a horrible life,' I said.

'That was not my affair,' the proprietor said, lazily rattling together as he spoke a little pocketful of twenty-franc pieces.

Strange business I watched in that shop for the next few days, the exchange of odd commodities, and heard strange mutterings in corners amongst couples who presently rose and went to the back room, the old man following to ratify.

Twice a day for a week I paid my twenty francs, watching life with its great needs and its little needs morning and afternoon spread out before me in all its wonderful variety.

And one day I met a comfortable man with only a little need, he seemed to have the very evil I wanted. He always feared the lift was going to break. I knew too much of hydraulics to fear things as silly as that, but it was not my business to cure his ridiculous fear. Very few words were needed to convince him that mine was the evil for him, he never crossed the sea, and I, on the other hand, could always walk upstairs, and I also felt at the time, as many must feel in that shop, that so absurd a fear could never trouble me. And yet at times it is almost the curse of my life. When we both had signed the parchment in the spidery back

room and the old man had signed and ratified (for which we had to pay him fifty francs each) I went back to my hotel, and there I saw the deadly thing in the basement. They asked me if I would go upstairs in the lift; from force of habit I risked it, and I held my breath all the way up and clenched my hands. Nothing will induce me to try such a journey again. I would sooner go up to my room in a balloon. And why? Because if a balloon goes wrong you have a chance, it may spread out into a parachute after it has burst, it may catch in a tree, a hundred and one things may happen, but if the lift falls down its shaft you are done. As for sea-sickness I shall never be sick again, I cannot tell you why except that I know that it is so.

And the shop in which I made this remarkable bargain, the shop to which none return when their business is done: I set out for it next day. Blindfold I could have found my way to the unfashionable quarter out of which a mean street runs, where you take the alley at the end, whence runs the cul-de-sac where the queer shop stood. A shop with pillars, fluted and painted red, stands on its near side, its other neighbour is a low-class jeweller's with little silver brooches in the window. In such incongruous company stood the shop with beams, with its walls painted green.

In half an hour I stood in the cul-de-sac to which I had gone twice a day for the last week. I found the shop with the ugly painted pillars and the jeweller that sold brooches, but the green house with the three beams was gone.

Pulled down, you will say, although in a single

night. That can never be the answer to the mystery, for the house of the fluted pillars painted on plaster, and the low-class jeweller's shop with its silver brooches (all of which I could identify one by one) were standing side by side.

LOUQUIER'S THIRD ACT¹

By KATHARINE FULLERTON GEROULD

LOUQUIER had been crossed in love. The old phrase covers his case. The girl does not matter, the circumstances do not matter; nothing matters except that Louquier had fallen in love, and that the lady had not reciprocated—not at least effectively, to the point of marrying Louquier. She does not come into the story in her own person; only as a cause. She affected Louquier; and his state is responsible for what happened. Of course Louquier's own temperament counts largely; other men might have been affected differently. Louquier, crossed in love, was a very special human formula.

Louquier was cursed with a small patrimony that made it entirely unnecessary for him to work, so long as his tastes remained simple. The lady apart, he had no ambitions; he was, I regret to say, the sort of obsolescent fool who thinks that it is more lovely to be than to do, and that your most serious task in life is to adorn and beautify your personality. If he had been up to it, he would have been a first-class *dilettante*. He would have loved rejecting (like Walter Pater) exquisite cinerarias of the wrong colour, or leaving a concert-hall because Beethoven was too vulgarly romantic. But he could never have done either, for the simple reason that his good, garish taste would never have

¹ From *Valiant Dust*: copyright, 1915, 1922, by Charles Scribner's Sons. By permission of the publishers.

given him the tip. His way did not lie through Art. He was too easily pleased. He loved Beauty even when it was merely pretty. No, his way did not lie through Art.

Louquier knew something of all this and wisely did not try for instincts that he did not possess. But he had his own way of being a highbrow. He could first isolate and then appreciate an emotion or a sensation—either in himself or in others. He loved the quiet dramas that take place within an individual nature; he could scent psychologic moments from afar. The twist of a mouth or the lift of an eyebrow meant to him unutterable things. He would carry home with him a gesture, a phrase, a twitch of the mask, and before his comfortable fire sit, as in a parquet-box, watching a gorgeous third act of his own creation. It should be said here that Louquier was usually right about his third acts and seldom mistook a curtain-raiser for a play. He had a *flair*. He rejected, at sight, the kind of human being to whom no spiritual adventures come; and could recognize hysterical imitation a mile away. He despised emotion for emotion's sake. It might be as slight as you liked, but it must be the real thing. He was perfectly sincere in his own amorous misadventure; he suffered as naively as a boy of eighteen. His heart was veritably broken, and when he withdrew from the world it was to nurse a real wound.

Louquier had brown eyes, brown hair, brown skin, the lean figure that best sorts with that general brownness and half-presupposes an eyeglass. He did not, however, wear an eyeglass; and he had large, white, tombstone teeth—not the teeth

of his type. He was a good fellow, and popular with men. You see, he never told anyone about his passion for other people's crises; he kept it very shyly and decently to himself. Moreover, no one ever brought first-aid to the emotionally injured more promptly than Louquier, so people told him things. Yet, as he had no business, and had wandered a good deal (in the most conventional ways), he had no fixed circle of friends. At any given moment, in any given place, he was apt to be rather solitary.

That is enough about Louquier's personality. If you can't 'get' him, I can hardly give him to you.

Louquier withdrew, as I say, into himself—retreated to a house that, by accident of a cousin's investment, now, the cousin being dead, belonged to him. He had hitherto rented it, for the few years that he had owned it; but the lease had expired, and it struck Louquier that he had never lived in a house of his own. That in itself might give him a sensation—a conventional one, but worth experiencing. As he couldn't marry, and had no religion, perhaps it was as near as he would ever come to feeling like a pillar of society. It was really that sense of the curious value of living under one's own vine and fig-tree which drew him. His natural instinct would have been to retire to mountain fastnesses, or discover some Ravenswoodish ruin in which to shiver. You can see that he was very hard hit, and that he was not a subtle person.

The villa was at least remote from the scene of his discomfiture. It was a smallish, comfortable, rather ugly mansion on the bank of the Assiniboine, one of the older houses on Wellington Crescent, Winnipeg, Manitoba. Girdled by a high wall, its

best rooms arranged at the back, facing the river, to which its tangled garden sloped negligently down, Whitewood had a wholly English flavour of privacy and comfort. It was at once modest and sturdy; it lived to itself, and asked favours of no one—least of all the favour of looking into its neighbour's premises. That suited Louquier perfectly; he saw at once that a British tradition was there to offset the newness of Winnipeg. Of course, being officially an American, he couldn't well taste the essence of being 'colonial,' but he thought he could be secluded and *quindé* and 'middle' with the best. It quite suited his present temper, and he established himself. Good servants sprang miraculously into being on the spot—probably because he was a bachelor. The Assiniboine was a noble stream; the wall round his garden was very high; it was delightfully incongruous of him to be there at all; he was pleased with himself for having had the courage to come. He felt more steeped in foreignness than if he had done something more exotic. He saw no one, except for necessary business. He did not wish to force the note. He rather liked subjecting his dramatic sense to local colour. Still, he never forgot the girl, for he had been very hard hit. At this stage of Louquier's life he even shrank a little from encountering a woman.

Then—it was hard to say just when, for his experience was very gradual—he began to be uncomfortable; he could not precisely say how or why. He had mapped out for himself a course of reading that included some notorious modern Frenchmen. (This was all before the War.) He hoped, I fancy, to get a sensation out of reading

Huysmans on the banks of the Assiniboine. Certainly any effect that Huysmans and Catulle Mendès could succeed in producing, in Winnipeg, would be a real effect, not meretriciously aided. The long evenings were a good time to read. During the day, he wandered about out of doors or went about the slow business of regenerating the interior of the house. One of his concessions had been to buy furniture in bulk, on the spot; but there were still gaps to be filled and rearranging to be done. His library was disfigured by a hideous stained-glass window. He was always planning to have it replaced; but in the end he kept it, because he thought the Indians would have liked it. You can see how unworthily Louquier amused himself. The fact is that he was very tired of it all—'it all' being life. He was bored with his own depression; but he simply could not bestir himself for an antidote. For a long time he felt, peevishly, that it was up to Wellington Crescent to be the antidote.

The spring came early that year, and, as I said, Louquier spent a good deal of time out of doors. Once, driven forth by his curious mental discomfort which had begun in the late winter, he took a train to Calgary. He returned almost immediately, and while he found that he was glad to get back, still, Calgary had not done for him what he hoped. Calgary was nauseous in retrospect without making him feel that Winnipeg was heaven. The fact is, Winnipeg was no place for Louquier. But his discomfort was of that peculiar kind which one does not run away from. At first it showed itself in mere inability to keep his mind on his book or on anything else. Louquier took a blue pill and hired a

horse to ride. But still he could not, in the evenings, keep his mind on anything. Then he wondered if the stained-glass window were not responsible: he hated it so. Even with the curtain drawn across it at night, he was conscious of it behind his back. The stained glass was not a picture, and was a design only by courtesy. It looked like what one used to see through an old-fashioned kaleidoscope; or, rather, it looked like circumstantial evidence of a lunatic's having been turned loose in a kindergarten. Yet the weeks went by, and he did not replace it. A morbid indolence was gaining the secret channels of his soul. His mind seemed as complicated an organism as the body, and it felt as your body feels when you have a bad case of grippe—he seemed to have mental hands and feet and vital organs, all of which ached and were tired. Yet he was still perfectly capable of admiring the technique of *En Ménage*—when he could pay attention to it. That was the trouble: he could not concentrate. Each thing refused to hold him and passed him on to another. He was a shuttlecock among a thousand battledores. He was not consciously averse to any of the physical facts of his life, except the stained-glass window. Finally he took to keeping the curtain drawn across it all day; but when the sun struck it, it spotted and dashed and figured the pale silk curtain. That was dreadful—to think that it had power to make over something else in its own indecent likeness. Louquier did rouse himself to get a heavy drapery of red rep hung over it. He felt that life would be better after that; but then the almond smell began.

Louquier was never able positively to account

for the odour of bitter almonds that beset him in the late spring. It had nothing to do with the vegetation at Whitewood. He sniffed every flower, shrub, and tree to find out. It was not merely in Louquier's mind, for when he went in to town or rode about the environs of Winnipeg he escaped it utterly. Nor was it the natural effluvium of the Assiniboine river. Besides, it was noticeable only in the house. He remarked it at first without suspicion, with a languid curiosity. He was almost happy, the one or two days that he spent sniffing. It gave him something to think about, for a few hours; something to do for its own sake. When he had proved the innocence of Nature, he investigated the house. He crept down into the kitchen one afternoon when both the servants were safe elsewhere, opened canisters, and peeped into cupboards. He could find no source for the odour. The almond smell surrounded him faintly in the kitchen as it did everywhere else, but there was no sharp increase of it in any corner to guide him. So he eliminated the kitchen from his conjectures, but he did not get rid of the smell. It was not unpleasant in itself, but it was too constant. To sit in the library, day after day, beside the red rep curtain and smell bitter almonds was too much—just too much.

Louquier had, of course, questioned the cook in the beginning; but she had disavowed completely all culinary use of almonds. At last, however—he had sniffed all the furniture by this time, and he was convinced that no upholstery or varnish was responsible—he decided to get rid of the cook. The odour had not been there when he settled in the villa, and that he did not carry the scent upon him-

self was proved by the fact that only in his own house were his nostrils oppressed by it. Of course he had sniffed through his whole wardrobe. It might be that his cook was an almond-carrier, as some people are typhoid-carriers. Getting rid of her meant getting rid also of his capable manservant, for the two were united in the bonds of matrimony. It was a great nuisance, for they served him well; but in the end he did it. Louquier could not bring himself to put to the woman a straight question as to whether any of her toilet accessories were almond-scented. He had attested the fact of the pervasive odour and shown that he objected to it; if she used almond soap or anything of the kind, it was up to her, on that hint, to change her cosmetic habit. But there was no sign of her making any such concession to his prejudices. He shrank from active discussion of so personal a matter. He had given hints enough, and his hints were disregarded. Either the woman wasn't responsible, or, being responsible, she chose not to reform. There was only one way out: he sacked them both.

The almond episode had no real sequel, but it had two important results. In the first place, the servants were not easily replaced. They left their 'situation,' undoubtedly spreading tales. Louquier was probably the victim of a servile boycott. At all events, he could not find their equivalents, and he had no friend among the Winnipeg ladies to turn to for counsel. It reduced itself to his getting on with a charwoman who came to get his breakfast and departed after cooking him an early and unspeakably English dinner. An old Scotsman pottered about the garden for a few hours each day. This domestic

discomfort was one result of the almond nuisance. The other was a serious impairment of Louquier's nervous condition. The mental discomfort became acute. That he was not the easy prey of obsessions is shown by the fact that he really did, within a week or so after the servants' departure, cease to notice the almond-smell. Had he been a nervous wreck, it would have been only too easy for him to invent the odour for himself; and that he did not do. It was really gone, and his nostrils bore unimpeachable witness to the fact. I do not offer Louquier's refusal to shut up the villa and leave Winnipeg as an evidence of sanity. To leave would have been the most sensible thing he could do. But there his mortal indolence came in. He could go about sniffing, but he could not go about packing. He simply stuck on, the worse for wear. Louquier also, of course, had the universal male illusion: namely, that he was a practical person. It was much more sensible to stay on a few months more and rent, if he could, in the autumn; no one would rent in the spring, anyhow; it would be a bad advertisement to leave so soon; and, besides, he was saving money. Everything, you see, combined to keep him there. Early in May he heard from a kind friend that the lady had announced her engagement. That disposed of any wandering notions he might have had of departure. It would be to insult his own heart to pretend it was a casino when it was really a tomb. Meanwhile the mental discomfort grew and grew like a secret malady. It is only fair to say that Louquier did not in the least enjoy his own drama. He would have given the world and all to be happy.

By mid-May, Huysmans, Catulle Mendès et Cie were flung aside. Louquier simply could not stand literature. He took to American fiction, which again shows his sanity. The novels disgusted him, but for a time they worked; even the love-making did not depress him, for it was very badly done. But after a fortnight the charm failed. He found himself idly inverting all the situations—making the characters (when there were any) sardonically and plausibly do something quite different. His running marginal gloss turned the most ridiculous and optimistic plots into the most logical and depressing horrors. The hero ceased, for Louquier, to rescue the heroine; the heroine walked not unscathed through her vicious context; the villains flourished like the green bay-tree, refusing either to reform or to perish. He stopped reading our serious contemporaries and took to the humorists. But he soon found that one cannot laugh indefinitely alone.

By June, Louquier was really in a bad way. If he had not tried to be sensible, he would have done much better; but he was busy adorning his personality with an iron will. At that stage of the game an iron will was about as useful to him as the red curtain over the stained-glass window. He ought, in the interests of health and happiness, to have wobbled a little; to have seized on Falstaffian wisdom and run away. His brown face was growing white with his effort. But Louquier was perfectly sincere in not seeing it that way. Remember, too, that his chosen diversion was failing him. A recluse on the banks of the Assiniboine, he had no third acts to divine. His *flair*, disused, became

temporarily lost to him, and he found the Winnipeg streets barren of drama. He could not even reconstruct the tragedy of his own charwoman, though obviously every charwoman must have had one. The Scotch gardener was as impenetrable as a Scotch mist. Louquier gave up riding; he gave up his blue pills; he stuck to his own vine and upas-tree. If he had not always expected to leave Winnipeg in the autumn, I think he would have gone under. But he did not—quite.

Louquier was now afraid. Up to that time he had not experienced fear; his condition had stopped at acute discomfort. It was very like a bodily ailment, not serious, for which people try home remedies. The home remedies had not worked, but he was not going to a specialist for a malady that seemed to attack him in one spot as much as, and no more than, in another. He would, you might say, hardly know whether to choose an aurist or an orthopedist. His broken heart, his indolence, and his iron will combined to keep him passive; and he called it being sensible. Thanks to the girl, flavour had gone out of life like the taste out of honey; it was a thick, insipid glue. It was wearing; it was disagreeable; but it could be borne, since other men had borne it. Then, as I say, fear came.

Louquier was sitting alone in his library, trying to read. The charwoman had left a few hours since; the gardener, of course, long before that. Quite suddenly he realized that he had a new fact to reckon with. He laid his book down very softly on the table, rose, by the aid of his iron will, from his chair, and walked slowly across to the corner of the room between the fireplace and the built-in

bookshelves. A light chair that stood in his way he moved, first passing his hand across its satin seat. Then he took his stand in the exact corner of the room, facing outward, arms truculently folded. He stood there for about five minutes, his eyes glancing hither and yon. Then he walked back, lugged his easy chair over by the fireplace and set it with its back to the wall. Before leaving it, he passed his hand carefully down the wall behind it. Then he moved the table, with the lamp, over beside the armchair. Thus the chair was hemmed in between the square table on one side and the jutting chimney-breast on the other. Behind it was a windowless wall. Louquier then sat down and took up his book again. He knew as well as if he had seen it with his eyes or heard it with his ears, where the thing was that disturbed him, but he refused to treat it as anything more than a manifestation of impudence. He trusted that by putting it, as it were, in its place, he could teach it manners—perhaps discourage it finally. The presence was perceptible to no sense; it flowed from spot to spot as quietly as air; but Louquier knew at any given moment where it was. He knew, too, whether it faced him or turned away; and he was more comfortable when it turned away. He kept his eyes on his book; he turned over pages; he even lighted and smoked a cigarette. He put up a brave front to the beastly thing. All the same, he knew that if it did not go away, he should have to sit there all night. He was not going to turn his back to it, to pass through the door; and he would not, positively would not (here was the iron will), back out of the room. Besides, if the thing followed him

upstairs, it would be worse. He could not switch on the upstairs lights from below. It was very curious how much he seemed to know about the thing—its size, for example, and the measure of its gait as it moved. He had even a vague impression of its shape, though his eye could not detect the faintest alteration in the look of the spot where it so definitely stood. He had as yet no means of knowing whether it was malevolent or not, but he loathed it. Occasionally he looked up from his book, oriented the presence, and looked directly at it with bored and scornful eyes. That was all he could do—get up again, he would not. Nor would he speak to it. He had a curious conviction that that way lay madness. No; he would meet it on its own ground. It moved, and he might move; it directed itself in some unnameable way toward him, and he would stare at it insolently; it occupied its place, and he would definitely occupy his own. But he would not speak; he would not probe the laws of its being farther than itself announced them. The merest visual sign would have been an immense relief to him—a devil with cloven hoof, a ghost draped in white, would have been child's play. Then he could have trusted his eye or his ear; as it was, he had to depend wholly on this nameless sense which placed his enemy for him. That nameless sense must not get blunted. He must keep very wide awake lest his enemy steal a march on him. Above all, he must not pretend to be unaware, and at the same time must pretend not to be frightened. How much intelligence the thing had, of course he did not know. It might be laughing at his bluff, but at least he would keep it up. He hoped he

should not grow sleepy. He had long since given up coffee and other stimulants. Louquier had become a man for whom there is absolutely no sense in keeping awake.

After an hour, during which Louquier turned over just forty pages—he kept careful track of his intervals—the thing departed by the door opening into the hall. Louquier felt it go. He had a very pretty problem to face, then: whether to follow it or not. If he did not, it meant sitting all night in his library—a great nuisance and a craven act. It would prove to the thing that he was afraid of it, and that would be exceedingly unfortunate. He ought, of course, to pretend that he was tired and wanted to go to bed—and to go. On the other hand, it was going to be a difficult business to blow out the lamp, walk into a dark hall, and mount the dark stairs to his bedroom. True, he could not see the thing, even in the lighted room; but he doubted if, in the dark, he could place it at all. It could be lived with only if it could be placed—delimited, as it were. He would not answer for his perfect conduct if the thing turned out to be lurking in the hall. He had no clue whatever to the intelligence of this besetting presence; but he felt, somehow, that it gauged him by the visual signs he gave. It might, if he stayed there, know that he was afraid of it; still, it might not be clever enough to make that inference. Whereas if he rushed out into the darkness, he could not answer for what he should do—something, very likely, that would show beyond question how terrified he was. He might even blunder into the thing itself, in the dark. He was by no means sure that it was perceptible even to the

touch, yet he dreaded the thought of such an impact as though it had been certain death. There was nothing for him to do but stay—though, for all he knew, the thing might already have wandered out into the night. He would not even get up and shut the door. How did he know whether doors were an obstacle to it? And if it should elect to come back, through the closed door, he would be more mocked than ever—to say nothing of the sense he would have of being shut in with it, without redress. No, there was nothing for it but for him to stay—and to fend off sleep somehow. If he should drowse and it should return, he would be left to its unclean mercy. Louquier was angry. First, the girl; then the stained glass and the bitter almonds; then the recognized but unadmitted stupidity of his whole Winnipeg idea; the acute discomfort—and now this.

Louquier got through the night without mischance. Toward dawn he grew so sleepy that nothing but sleep seemed to matter; his stupor blunted all his nerves. He fell asleep in his chair, indeed, and woke up with the streaming light of morning. The room was clear and free; you would never have guessed that anything save the commonplace had inhabited it. Naturally, Louquier took the line of wondering if he had not eaten something that oppressed him; though why boiled lettuce should introduce you to the supernatural! The memory was vivid, however, and he saw a man about installing electric switches below-stairs—one inside the library door, and one in the hall outside. The business took a day or two, and until it was done Louquier went straight from his dining-

room to his bedroom, locked the door, and read there. He did not sleep very well on these nights. For one thing, he was acutely ashamed of being upstairs behind a locked door; for another, he had a very definite conception—though he had no corroborative ‘sense’ of it—of the thing’s ranging about below in unholy and unlawful occupation of his, Louquier’s, premises. No man really likes to pull the bedclothes over his head while the burglar is frankly stealing the plate below, even though he may wisely choose to do so; and that is precisely what it seemed to Louquier that he was doing. Still, he was not going, for any consideration of mere dignity, to risk another encounter until he had guarded his exit with electricity. With the lights properly installed, electric switches marking his natural line of progress from after-dinner coffee to bed, he returned to his habit of spending the evening in the library. The fact that there was nothing he really wanted to read—*ergo*, no joy to be had in sitting there, anyhow—tipped all his plans and precautions with irony. Still, a man has to assume that his routine—whatever it may be—has an unimpeachable reason for being, or he has given up the game completely. Louquier was not ready to destroy his convention and let life depart.

The next fortnight, to Louquier, was a long, cumulative agony. There would be no point in making a diary of it; given the initial facts, psychic and physical, which I have tried to make clear, one has only to let logic deal with the situation. Each day became, in its turn, a new irritation as well as a fresh irritant. Night after night he faced the thing in his library. Its hours of appearing and

disappearing differed slightly from evening to evening; it chose, apparently, not to work like an automaton or a mechanism, but to create to the end its impression of individuality, of volition. It kept its appointment irregularly, as though it had other engagements; but it always kept it.

Of course, in the long, irrelevant, sunlit hours, he balanced in his mind the possibilities of the thing's getting at his sanity. But he took his sanity objectively, too. If his body was the citadel that must not crumble, his healthy mind was the garrison within that must, if possible, live on, and live on without surrendering. He did not want to crawl out by any subterranean passage, and then make a hopeless running fight of it. Not he! He stood on his rights; but he stood even more, soldier-fashion, on his counted ammunition and the state of his supplies. You could not truthfully say, however, that the wall was unbreached. There were some nasty little breaks in it here and there—as if the girl, the stained glass, and the almond smell, the unaccountable discomfort of all the months, had been spies doing effective work within, while awaiting the real *coup*. Louquier was not, nervously, all that he might have been. Already, after a fortnight, he felt less able to combat the thing. If it had appeared irregularly, so that Louquier could have held it, to any extent, dependent on outside causes—the weather, his digestion, anything—it would have been easier. But whatever else might come or go, and though it chose its precise hour to suit itself, it never failed him. 'Old Faithful,' he jeered silently to himself once. Some time between dusk and dawn he could be sure of it. In the third week

of his siege he began definitely to fear that he could not keep up his bluff much longer. He had a horrid vision of some surrendering gesture—of his speaking to it, or going on his knees to it. He loathed it almost more than he feared it. It seemed a dishonourable enemy for a man to be up against. He would not be treated like a soldier and a gentleman, if he did surrender.

Then came a night when Louquier walked from dining-room to library, preternaturally grave. He felt so sapped and shrunk that he wasted no gestures in bravado. He let himself walk like a tired man—which he was. He put his tobacco beside him; he piled up his books; he passed his hand over the hollow of the chair before seating himself; he shook the lamp a little to see if there was oil enough to last out the night, if need be. All that was mere ritual—and how tired he was of it! If the thing would only let up on him for once—give him a rest, a chance to revictual himself and bury his dead! This inevitable vigilance was like a cancer, eating daily farther into his vital tissue. Should he never again be able to live carelessly, as other men do? In an hour, or two hours, or three, he would look up from his book and be aware of its entrance; would diagnose its actual mood and select his mask accordingly; would go through the same difficult and wearisome ordeal. When its whim was spent, and it took leave of him, he would go upstairs to bed. Toward morning he would sleep. He had never shut the door against it, judging that his state of mind would be worse if, to his knowledge, it came through a closed door. He left the portal hospitably open, and it entered like any human

through the passage provided. Good God! how bored he was!

He did not have to wait long to-night. It came as early as if it had rushed straight from dinner. Immediately he knew how it placed itself—in a Morris chair opposite him, beside a French window that led into the garden. There was something jaunty and flippant in its manner. Absurd though it may sound to speak of the thing's manner, it is quite within the facts as Louquier's mind registered them. He was aware, as I have said, of its gait; some stir of the displaced air where it moved informed him. He perceived, though by none of the five senses, mass and coherence in this creature, just as some hitherto useless convolution of his brain registered its temper. It breathed its humour to him to-night in some exact, unnameable way. Louquier leaned his head back and waited. Perhaps it would go early; perhaps it had merely looked in to remind him, and would presently be off, having other Stygian fish to fry. He hoped so, for he was very tired. He even felt drowsiness coming on before its time, and Louquier had no spur to prick him awake. None but fear; and its sharp edge was blunted with much rowelling of his own flesh. He closed his eyes occasionally for an instant, as one does to push sleep out with the firm, sudden gesture of opening the eyelids. And at last, in one of those lightning-brief intervals, the thing moved toward him. The event was all too quick for Louquier to think, to diagnose afresh its mood. He knew only, as he had never known before, that he must have done with it. He had reached the point known to all of us—though, thank heaven, in other

contexts—when *ennui* becomes a passion like hatred or blood-lust, when weariness turns from a sigh to a shriek. And with that sense he knew that the enemy was at last in the citadel. His sanity was threatened. He dared wait no longer for its moment. Louquier caught up a light chair that stood near and brought it heavily down on the spot where the thing stood. The slim chair rocked on its broken legs, and sank down in a mass of splinters. For the first time, Louquier turned his back on the presence and fled from the room. He did not care; he was not afraid any more as he rushed up the stairs; he was only passionately excited and conscious of relief at having at last acted, in however mad a way. All his sanity had gone into the blow; it was Louquier's protest, the protest of the whole of him, of the integral man, against the sly and foul attack on his integrity. That was what the thing had desired—to resolve his integrity, to riddle his ego, and shred up his very soul; to leave him incapable of saying 'I' with conviction. It had wanted to disintegrate Louquier, to smash his singleness into bits, to turn him to a loose agglomeration of mental dust—so that no man again should be able to say, 'This is Louquier.' Louquier knew as well as any of us that you do not combat the psychic fact with physical weapons, yet the violent gesture had seemed his only way out. Though he could not hope to destroy the thing, he could perhaps prove to it that he was not a mere puddle of fear. Practically, it was as silly as trying to stab a ghost; yet it had counted, to Louquier himself. He had no notion that he had hurt the thing, but he had shown that his muscles were still at the service of his

hatreds. Just before he rose, he had felt himself going; the very marrow of his nature oozing away through unguessed channels. By that one gesture the faithful flesh had saved him.

Or, at least, so he thought, standing in his bedroom, erect and panting, facing the door with clenched hands. A trickle of blood across one knuckle elated him; it showed that he had put forth strength, that the chair had really crashed and splintered under his hands. Within him, the blood pumped through his heart; he felt its healthy, impatient motions through his body. Would the thing rush up the stairs to avenge itself? He did not care. Let it come. It might kill him, but not, now, before he had made his gesture; not before he had let it know how he loathed it, and how little it had mesmerized his spirit. He could at least die a free man, overmatched, but not cowed. For the first time in months Louquier felt genial, like a man playing an honest part in a world of other men. All the last weeks he had seemed to himself isolated, shamefully, as a criminal is isolated, because he is not worthy to associate with others. All the things that had happened to him had seemed chosen and selected for the purpose of showing him that he was small game of a very dirty sort.

Louquier, standing there, triumphant over the unreal, with blood on his knuckles from a smashed and splintered chair, is an absurd figure to the inward eye. He was more like a silly and complacent drunken gentleman than a hero who has fought with the powers of darkness. I am aware of that. But Louquier, to whom, aforesaid, a lifted hand or a *révérence de la cour* could seem, for reasons, an

epic gesture, did not see himself in that light. He was conscious only that for the first time since he had said good-bye to the girl he had expressed himself. Hanging the red rep curtain, for example, had been the mere pout of the aesthete. Sacking the cook was a weak artificial gesture. But now he walked into his dressing-room, and washed the blood—it was only a drop or two—off his knuckle with the beautiful physical simplicity of a navvy. It was an honourable wound; and honourable wounds got in the day's work you stanch as quickly as you can.

Louquier's sense of the presence had never worked, away from it. He did not know whether it remained below or had departed from his house. It had not followed him, and after half an hour he realized that it did not mean to leap to its revenge. He mused a little, strategically. It seemed possible that his enemy, insulted by a mere thing of flesh, might bide its time—wait for him to sleep and then pursue him. He fancied it very angry; so angry, perhaps, that it would not leave his roof before it had struck back. Note that Louquier, on reaffirming his independence, in defying his terror, had no sense whatever of stepping out from under an obsession. The thing was not an obsession; it was real, and it had been—perhaps still was—there. His conception of facts had not been false; his attitude to them, only, had been wrong. He realized, for example, that he must watch until morning, for he still did not wish to be helpless in sleep before his enemy. So far as he knew, the only power that could prevail against it was the sovereign sun. Still the practical man, he made with

alert and vivid gestures his preparations for the night : drew an easy-chair under the light, put on a comfortable dressing-gown, set a pitcher of cold water on the table beside him, and took up one of the humorists. Tobacco was not forgotten. It was an hour or more, though, before he either smoked or read; for quite that length of time he waited for a sign. The silence of night ebbed and flowed round him. External sounds—a voice, carriage-wheels, the stir of an animal in the shrubbery—fell across it occasionally; but every now and then he would seem to reach some central pool of stillness, and then that sense in him which perceived the presence would be strainingly on its guard. No sign came, however—none at all; and after an hour he relaxed a little and lighted a pipe.

The hours that followed were singularly monotonous. Suspicion, reassurance, false alarms, and quick reactions followed one another interminably. Louquier was perfectly sure that something would happen before morning; that his enemy, having perfected its plan, would mount in search of him. Thence resulted a curious ignorance of how time was passing. He had covered his watch with a cushion so as not to hear its ticking, for though the straining of that sense was not listening, it was more like listening than anything else. The dawn, when it came, was incredible to him; it seemed impossible that the thing should not have struck before fleeing, though the dim light on the waters of the Assiniboine proved to him that he was safe. Louquier, still half dressed, threw himself on his bed and slept. He dreamed, a chain of dreams, about the girl, and woke jaded.

The disapproving charwoman had set out his breakfast in response to his ring from above-stairs. Louquier went straight to the dining-room and ate. His first cigarette he took outside in the garden; there was time enough, in all conscience, to revisit the battlefield. To him, among the flowerbeds, appeared the charwoman, twisting her apron in red, wet hands. She had found the heap of broken wood, and all the self-righteousness of her clan was in arms. She had not touched nothing, so help her; she had looked in with her mop and all, before breakfast, and—she had seen what she had seen. She had not gone in; she had left things as they was for the master to see with his own eyes. Louquier, standing on the threshold of the garden door, his back to the light, realized swiftly that there were three possibilities—to affect not to believe her, to admit that he had done it himself, or to say that it was very curious and perfectly incomprehensible. It does not matter which one he chose, for it is plain to see that with charring easy come by, to say nothing of plenty of places nearer 'ome, and her with three children to leave all day by themselves—it is plain to see that all three must inevitably have led to the same conclusion. Either she had been called a liar, or Louquier drank, or he couldn't keep other people from playing the monkey with his property. The charwoman, of course, gave notice, to take effect after dinner that evening. Louquier thought for a moment of asking the gardener if he could cook; but whatever the gardener could have cooked, Louquier knew certainly he could not have eaten. Nor would he for the twentieth time consult an employment agency

in vain. It was a dog's life, and he wouldn't live it. He would go to an hotel.

You are not to think that Louquier intended even then to run away. He formed, during the day, a somewhat complicated plan. Mingled with the relief of his decision to sleep and eat elsewhere—the charwoman, showing a proper pride to the last, burned everything she cooked for him that day—was the annoyance of realizing that he must also stick by. He must not really leave the house; he must spend much of his day there. Also—and this was most important of all—he must be at his post during the long evening. If the thing returned, it must find him on the spot. His relation to it had become to Louquier the most important present fact of life, the fact he could least ignore. If it did not come—well, after, say, three nights, he might honourably assume that it did not intend to return. Then he could shut up the villa and leave Winnipeg, if he liked. The practical man could no longer insist that he was saving money by living in his own house if he was sleeping and eating at an inn. He could tell the agent that he found it hard to get satisfactory servants; *that* wouldn't give the house a black eye. The practical man, absolved and justified, could go anywhere he liked, having done, in perfect dignity, with his Winnipeg adventure. You may infer from all this that Louquier was a different man after dealing, in however absurd a way, with his enemy. But he was not precisely different; he had merely, as it were, rearranged the furniture; a number of things had gone into the attic. His mind was in no sense a new house, or even a refurnished one.

To prove this, I have only to tell you that Louquier felt his enemy, if anything, more actual, more dangerous, than during the long vigil in his bedroom the night before. It had not perished. Was a mock-Sheraton chair ever known to destroy an elemental being? The fact that it had delayed its revenge seemed to Louquier significant and appalling, and reinforced his conception of it as a creature of complicated intelligence. It was not a mere evil impulse, to spend itself in windy, ungoverned ways. It could control itself, hold off, plan—achieve, probably. It is no exaggeration to say that Louquier looked forward to the evening as being very probably fatal to him. If his will had not already been made, he would, I fancy, have made it that day. You are to realize that Louquier did not feel himself strong; he only felt himself decent. He had hit back and proved himself normal. What gesture he should find to meet it with again, he did not know—perhaps none. For that matter, it might bring seven other devils with it when it came again. Louquier was very tired, and his domestic arrangements and disarrangements did not make him less so. At the end of the afternoon he flung himself down in his hotel bedroom and slept, waking only in time for a late and hasty dinner. He dressed for dinner, too, which cut his margin down. As he got into a cab and gave his own address to the driver, he had all the sense of being late for an important engagement. He distinctly wanted to be first on the ground. Besides, he had to light up the house and fling open the windows—to say nothing of arranging the library, as usual, for the encounter.

First on the ground he was. He had plenty of time to make his preparations to the last detail. He was more tired than he remembered having been at all; but he had taken coffee and did not fear sleep. He thought with irritation of the tourist crowd he had left in the hotel—a mob with suit-cases, ready to go on to Banff and Lake Louise. They had been very irrelevant to his own situation—or was he merely irrelevant to theirs? Sitting in his library, he recalled their fantastic hats and voices. Suppose he had kidnapped one or two of *them*, and chucked them into his library there above the Assiniboine! He felt injured; he almost wished he could have.

The evening lengthened; and still Louquier sat there, back against the wall, flimsily barricaded as usual. The thing was late, very late. Ten o'clock, and still it had not come. He read a little, or pretended to, then at last lit a cigarette. And as if the striking of the match had been a signal, his enemy entered. Louquier's heart sank; he knew then that all day, beneath his certainty, he had nursed a frail hope that it would not return; that it had had enough of him. Just as always, his sense placed it for him, showed him where it moved and how it felt. It moved haltingly, jerking from corner to corner, as if the anger in his famous gesture had maimed it. But it did not sit down. It moved about the room in odd curves and tangents, limping ever a little nearer to Louquier. Louquier could not stir; he could not even, this time, rise. Never had the thing so concentrated its emotion on him; it focused him as with straight glances from its invisible eyes. He had not dreamed that he, that any man,

could be hated like that. The thing *was* hate, as God is love. It came swerving toward him like a drunken doom. Louquier sat braced in his chair, his right hand, with the lighted cigarette, shaking. There was no redress for this; the thing had stripped itself of manner and of all hypocrisy. It was coming; it was on him. Intenser than a physical touch, it covered him, pushing him back against the cushions until the chair strained and creaked. His head bent backward over the rim of the chair—his neck felt like to break. Had it been human, its breath would have suffocated him, so close was its invisible countenance to his. He could not move his legs or feet, or his left arm, but his right elbow, pushed out across the widish arm of the chair, had a little margin still. He drove his elbow out farther, then strained up a tense forearm and dug the lighted cigarette into the air directly in front of his own face. So complete was his consciousness of this terrible imponderable thing that he expected it to feel pain. He held the cigarette there implacably, not three inches from his own nose. In about ten seconds the lighted end went out. Yet he held it there, as if the dead cigarette could still brand his enemy. Slowly, very slowly, he got the sense of the thing's slipping from him, of its weakly pulling away. It seemed to withdraw, a loose and diminished being, out into the room. He could lift his head again; he could lean forward, could stir his legs and feet. It was still there, but its hatred seemed weaker, like the hatred of a sick man. Louquier's eyes never left it, but he threw away the cigarette stub and reached out to the box at his left for another, which he lighted and began to

smoke. His neck ached shockingly, and he was limp from the pressure of his antagonist—that curious, weightless pressure on his body, as of air on the lungs. As he smoked, he watched it. It drew farther and farther away, proceeding now with indecision, different indeed from the angry lurches by which it had approached him. It seemed vaguer, weaker, almost helpless. For an instant it seemed to Louquier that the thing was groping for the door and could not find it—as if he had blinded it. Then it disappeared utterly, flowing aimlessly, feebly, across the threshold. He was aware of it to the last—knowing even the moment of its crossing the threshold and the instant when there was no vestige left of it.

For a half-hour Louquier sat on in his library, smoking, but not pretending to read. The thing would not come back that night, he knew; it had gone with all the gestures of defeat. He left the house then, though he took the precaution of leaving the light in the hall to burn on until daylight. He wanted no ambushes. Walking through the garden to the street was perhaps the worst moment Louquier had ever had, for the night was at his back. Safe in his bed at the hotel, he fell instantly asleep, and did not wake until the sun was high.

Louquier had been tired many times in Winnipeg—during the last month almost continuously so. But his weariness on this day was such a weariness of the body as he had not hitherto known. He felt sick, as if he had drunk deep the night before; he had all the sensations of recovering from orgy. His face in the mirror frightened him. Positively,

it was a marvel that he had stood out against his enemy as he had. He had a desperate desire to send the keys to his agent and to fling himself into a train; but after a day of conflict, during which all his food tasted fever-soaked, and his feet seemed cunningly wrapped in lead, he decided that he must go back once more to Wellington Crescent. After that, he would be free. Louquier's ardour had ebbed; the magnificent physical rage that had enabled him to smash the chair down upon his enemy, and then rush past it up the stairs, even the tense and quiet determination with which he had pushed the lighted cigarette into its face, were gone. He was very clear as to what had happened. The thing had nearly had him; his mind was just on the point of surrendering before its advance, and the stupid, loyal flesh had stepped in and saved him. Twice his arm had been lifted, by no conscious volition of his own, when his brain had accepted defeat. What he had feared the first time was madness; the second time he had feared only death. Still, even from that lesser catastrophe, it was his body that had defended him, and with no orders from him. The body had done enough; he ought to give it rest, let its noble instincts relax and recuperate. Suppose he went again; would it not be too much to ask of the taxed flesh? He had no reason to suppose that if he spent another evening in his unloved library, anything whatever would 'happen.' He fancied the thing was tired of the game. Yet he could not promise that; and he knew that, should it reappear, he could not combat it with mind alone. Never, for example, could he focus his weary emotions sufficiently to meet its

hatred with like hatred—if, indeed, anything human could. This thing carried no useless baggage; it could give itself entirely to its business of hating; and its capacity was one of the well-kept secrets of the universe. No; if he met it again, he would have simply to hope that his body would make another effort. He had done nothing, really, except register his attitude to the presence; but that, only his body had been capable of doing. He had expressed himself to it only in two wild, instinctive gestures. Would there be strength enough there for another, if another were needed? How *could* he go?

Yet, in the end, Louquier went. He could never have done with the enemy until he had passed an evening in his library unvisited by it. He longed passionately to ask some one to go with him. A bell-boy from the hotel would do. But he knew such an evening would be no test. He ordered a cab to come for him at eleven, and told the driver not to ring the bell, but to whistle outside. When he reached the gate, it seemed to him that he could not enter; but something—the rusted remnant of his iron will, perhaps—carried him in. In his pocket he had a loaded pistol—a quaint notion, which none the less gave him some comfort. Completely incorporeal as the thing was, it seemed to understand his motions. He could not speak to it; his silent spirit could not communicate with its silence; he could make it know what he felt about it, apparently, only by the gestures of some low fellow in a rage. Oh, it was a vulgar beast!

Pistol cocked in his hand, Louquier sat through his first half-hour, waiting. There was no sign of its

approach. Then, little by little, he became aware that it was not going to come. So slowly did this assurance gain on him that he knew it only as a deepening peace, gradual as the long Northern twilight. The room was splendidly empty of the presence—empty of it to all eternity. He could fling his keys at the agent, and take a train tomorrow. He had the definite sense of having crossed something; of being on the other side of a gulf; of having emerged from a region of horror and having left a big neutral space between it and him. It even came over him as he sat there, healthily lulled, that he had, without knowing it, experienced a third act of his own. Louquier's enemy was at last, for him, behind footlights. He had got his grip, and could now deal with the episode as drama. It 'composed' for him: clear proof that he was blessedly outside it; and that he was again (as it had intended he never should be) Louquier. His weariness became pleasant, turned to a velvet drowsiness. Not once, since the girl had rejected him, had he known such peace. He could almost, with half-shut eyes, envisage a future—a happy future that he could build with patience and delight. Louquier drowsed, sunk in his chair. He knew now that it would not come, and he felt safe as a child in its cradle. He was too dog-tired to mind the discomfort of his position. Presently he slept profoundly, his head on his curled arm.

The cabman's whistle sounded in the late evening, and Louquier came up through layers of sleep to greet it. In that waking instant before the pattern of life is wholly clear, he jumped, startled. His cramped, unconscious fingers closed tight on

the trigger of the pistol, and he fired, as neatly as if he had meant to. Louquier was even spared the knowledge of what he had done, for the bullet, knowing what it was made for and knowing nothing else, went straight. For he had won his moral victory; and there was nothing left his baffled enemy but to stoop to physical accident. At last the impatient cabman's ring pealed through the house, but no one answered it.

NIGHTMARE JACK

By JOHN METCALFE

I

It's curious how things are forgotten on the river. Has it ever struck you? People live and die upon its banks, ships come and go upon its muddy waters, and of them all hardly the names survive the morrow. Love and crime, despair and death, make the city with every flood and pass out with every ebb, but they scarcely leave a ripple on the secret river; it flows on and forgets them all.

A bare ten years have slipped by since Nightmare Jack was last seen about the docks, yet I would lay you long odds that, save for his deformity, he might walk to-day from Poplar to the Isle of Dogs and pass unrecognised. Even he, whom we thought unforgettable, the little, hare-lipped man with the hoarse voice of clutching terror, victim of that strange, incessant dream.

It is as well that he cannot come back. He dreams no longer. We who gave him to the keeping of the river can sleep the sounder knowing that the brown waters hold him fast. . . .

I shall give you the story as at last he told it to us those ten years back in the upper room of the little, black inn at Shale, whilst the sweat broke and glistened on his face and the horror gathered in his eyes.

The four of us had dropped down in Cohen's boat with the ebbing tide and made Roaring Middle by early afternoon. All day long the river had shone

in a hard, dull light like a great, brown muscle, but as we turned out of the stream and crept up the creek and alongside the tiny stone causeway back of the deserted inn the sky began to darken, and a wind stirred the surface of the water into little, choppy waves.

We made fast the boat and stepped ashore, and I gave the three low raps upon the door that Jack, and Jack's Eliza, understood. As we waited I looked at my three companions, and saw that over two of them as over me there hung the shadow of that black business we had afoot.

There were Crabbe, Cohen, myself, and that other—Gilchrist. Heaven knows why he was there, that shameful, silent man with his white, pasty cheeks and his dull, averted eyes! Even to his face we had called him 'Dead Fish,' and he had never raised a hand to strike or given us the lie. Yet he was safe enough, we thought, and had the uses of all evil things. . . .

No answer came to my knocking, so, having tried in vain to turn the handle, we climbed in through a low window which had been left half-closed, and then marched upstairs, Cohen leading. He threw open the door of the room we knew for Jack's, entered, and signed to us to follow. We filed in, bending our heads under the low doorway. Gilchrist, who was the last, turned the key.

Never have I seen a man more sick than he who lay half-dressed upon the bed. The scanty hair lay dank upon his forehead, and the face was gone a dead grey colour like the belly of a slug. One look at him was enough to tell us that we had been anticipated in our errand. He could hardly last

more than a few hours at the longest. Only in his little, wicked eyes did the old, evil light yet creep and flicker, and the succulent sin seem still to well and ooze.

He turned his head to the door as it closed behind us, and when his gaze rested upon Gilchrist he managed to raise his voice in a hoarse whisper and a slow and dwelling rage.

'You!' he said. 'You beeg, white scum. Why have you come? You of all men, you Nurse, you mothers' plague, you man-stealer!'

The venomous words did not sting Gilchrist to retort, but the blood mounted sluggishly about his neck and ears, and a dull hate smouldered in his eyes.

Suddenly, as he was turning inwards from the locked door, he uttered a cry of fear, and raised an arm to protect his face from something which, at a motion of Jack's elbow, leapt at him from the bed-end like a flying, furry shadow. When he put down his hand we saw the crimson drops starting from a long scratch across one cheek. Below him a great, neuter cat rubbed, purring noisily, against his shins.

Crabbe laughed grimly. 'Pongo has learnt that trick well,' he said, 'and after all we could hardly expect a better welcome.'

The man on the bed stirred and cleared his throat.

'Leesten,' he said, in that curious, lisping, almost cultured voice of his in which the occasional French accent sorted so strangely with the foul idiom of the river, 'Leesten, you coves! You needn't tell me why you've come, but you're too late—too

late. The las' trip's been run. I been expectin' you, though, ever since Eliza leave me two days back. She knew Rory'd tol' you where I was. She was afraid and ran. Two days I been lyin' 'ere, Sirs, waitin' for the scrape o' your boat against the stage an' the soun' o' your boots upon the stairs. And in me dreams——

'Curse your dreams!' snarled Cohen. 'You've them to thank for our visit. The man who dreams aloud about us and our concerns must sleep where he won't be heard. . . .'

The little, stretched-out man looked up at him, and his shoulders began to shake in a wheezy, mirthless laugh that set the nerves acrawl. 'Four o' you,' he chuckled, 'four o' you, be gosh, to put a dyin' man to 'is sleep. Why, gents, I take it as a ruddy honour, I do an' all, he, he!'

There was something extraordinarily shocking in his merriment at such a time, and that he should be so game was going to make our business none the easier. Yet it was not all bravery on his part. His eyes were bright with the fear of something from which he might welcome even death itself as an escape.

'Say, Mr. Morgan, Sir,' said he to me after a pause, 'seet down one moment, and let me tell you what I 'ave to tell. It won't take long. I'd take it as a favour. Seems like I must get it off me chest. You'll think less 'ard o' Nightmare Jack per'aps, when once you've 'aird. What's the time now?'

I told him it was half-past three.

'Gimme till four, gents,' he whispered thickly; 'alf an hour, like good blokes.'

I looked at the others, Cohen and Crabbe, and

then, hesitating and half-ashamed, nodded to Nightmare Jack. Was there, I wondered, some ruse behind the urgency of this request, or was it merely a pathetic staving-off of doom, perhaps an attempt to raise our pity? Anyhow, we had him safe and sure, and the man might well be dead by four o'clock. It would save trouble. . . .

So, whilst the uneasy wind without began to question and to rattle at the panes, Nightmare Jack narrated, brokenly and painfully, with a sob of terror often rising in his throat and catching at his breath, the story, vain and tumultuous, of the Pointing Hand.

At times, and under strong emotion, the whispering voice would tend again towards the *lingua franca* of Quebec; yet in the main held steady to the slightly tintured English which is all that I can try to reproduce.

We had taken chairs near the door, but in the grip of what we heard the three of us drew closer and closer to the bed. Only Gilchrist remained seated in a darkening corner, nursing with a handkerchief his wounded cheek.

On a pillow and close to the head of Nightmare Jack, Pongo, the huge cat that I had given him, slowly preened itself and purred.

II

'Eight year ago to-day, near as may be, three men sailed out o' Rangoon with jewels fit for 'eaven in their 'ands and the fear of 'ell in their 'earts.

'All the way from Sinbo, far up country, they'd

come, and on the journey down to the ship things 'ad not gone well with them. Leetle 'itches, more or less, that might 'ave been explained easily enough if their nerves 'adn't been on edge with knowin' what they carried an' 'ow they'd come by it.

'T'ree times or four they'd given that shinin', sinful stuff its last look afore chuckin' it into the river, an' t'ree times they'd changed their minds an' 'urried on again.

'But when once they'd got it an' themselves aboard an' couldn' see that funny, one-eyed fellow who'd followed them down from Mandalay no more their minds were easier, an' they spends all their time plannin' what they was goin' to do with the money they would make when they got 'ome.

'Only ole Fatty Simpson began to lie awake in his bunk at night rememberin' all o' them leetle things that 'ad 'appen on the journey down, an' in the mornin' 'e would say to them other two, Cutler an' Langrish, "Thinks I'll chuck me 'and in, mates, an' if you takes my advice you'll 'eave the lot over the side, stones an' all. I tells you I know what rubies ought to look like, but these are just the colour o' stale blood. Leastways, they are now. I tell you, they're *rum'uns*. Anyway, you can 'ave my share o' the pizenous stuff, an' much good may it do you."

'But some'ow 'e never told them what partly explained 'is nervousness—that in lookin' over into the well deck for'ard 'e'd spotted that berry-brown, one-eyed cove tailin' on to a rope with a bunch o' lascars, an' so Langrish an' Cutler only

laughs at 'is fidgets—else I would never a' come into the story later on. . . .

'When they reach Londo'n there were seven others waitin' for them to share out the pretties. Ten of 'em all told there was, an' Dr. Gill the 'ead o' the crowd. It was 'e an' Mr. Cuthbert an' Langrish 'ad got wind o' the stuff first of all in some old temple up Mogaung way an' formed what they called a Syndicate to get it. They'd drawn lots to fix who should go for it, an' Langrish e' always swore that the t'ree red balls 'e an' 'is mates pulled from the box 'ad been doctored some'ow by Gill an' the rest.

'But they thought no more o' that once they was 'ome, an' when they met to talk things over in the little doss-'ouse out at Rother'ithe they all toasted themselves and their great "Luck" till they was too tipsy to stand. Even Fatty 'ad got over 'is fright 'an took back what 'e'd said about givin' up 'is claim.

'All the same, when 'e an' a couple more were rowin' down stream after the meetin' to Jellicoe's Wharf, 'e notice another boat edgin' after them in the shadow of the bank, an' though 'e couldn' see the face o' the fellow that pulled at the oars, 'is back reminded 'im again of that squint-faced chap as 'ad come across with them in the fo'c'sle of the *Burmah Queen*. . . .

'It 'ad been agreed after a good deal o' talkin' and quarrellin' that the stones themselves should be divided out, an' then that each man should sell 'is lot as 'e liked, provided 'e did it slow an' careful. Ah, you know, even then there was a reason for this way of arrangin' things that none of 'em liked

to own to. They wanted, some'ow, to get right clear away from what they'd done so they'd never 'ave to see each other again and be reminded. . . . The rubies, since they'd come aboard at Rangoon, 'ad be'aved well enough for the matter o' that, but Fatty Simpson 'ad got talkin'—an' you know what being frighten' is—it spreads, *spreads* . . . !"

Suddenly Nightmare Jack set up a wild, high, echoing laugh, and the cat for a moment stopped its purring and its preening to lick his hand. Cohen had started forward with an exclamation, but Crabbe pushed him back. 'It's all right,' he said. 'That's how it always takes him, when he has his dreams. . . .'

Presently the laughing ceased abruptly, and the hoarse and stealthy voice went on.

'For three years or more those ten men lived 'idden from each other. They was all round about London as it chance, but for all the times they ever met after the share-out they might 'ave been thousands of miles apart. The stones went very, very slowly, an' each man 'ad 'ardly got rid of a quarter of 'is lot when the things began to 'appen. . . .

'It wasn't with Fatty Simpson that they started altogether, but it was from 'im I 'eard it first, Sirs, an' I'll tell you 'ow it was.

'Fatty 'ad bought 'imself an' ouse down the river near Grays, an' 'ad come to the end of his first three stones, so one day 'e come up to London to try an' sell the fourth.

'In the train, about half a dozen stations before Fenchurch Street, 'e begin to dream. . . .

'Of course I know of what 'e dream. It's always

the same dream. Never to this day do I or any of the others tell a 'uman soul about those dreams. Not that I 'aven't been asked often enough. But it would 'ave done no good. . . . What would people 'ave said if I 'ad tell them of the thing that follow me night and day, the thing that flash before me now the moment I close my eyes, this long, brown, lower arm of a man, with the 'and stiffen from the wrist, an' the fingers pointin', always pointin'!

'It was that that Fatty saw out of the carriage window as 'e looked north over Stratford marsh, an' 'e open 'is bag in a 'urry, an' take a quick pull at the flask 'e 'ad inside. That stiffen 'im up a lot, an' when 'e look out again 'e couldn' see what 'e seen afore. Presently the train ran into Fenchurch Street, an' 'e got out an' made for the nearest bar. 'E swallowed a few smart ones to complete the cure, an' by the time 'e set off east an' towards the river with the ruby in a wallet in 'is pocket 'e was laughin' to 'imself about 'is funny dream. Yet even then somethin' cold at the bottom of 'is 'eart seemed to tell 'im that 'is laughin' days were over an' the game was up.

'The ruby 'e'd brought with 'im, Sirs, was a rare big one, with two circles cut on it, one inside the other, an' the fence 'e was sellin' it to looked at 'im a bit curious as 'e turned it over in 'is little room upstairs.

"'Funny,'" 'e says. "A bloke was in 'air 'bout six months ago with a ruby just like this—cut in the same way. I couldn' give 'im much for it either because o' that. Marked stones are too dam' risky."

'E went on lookin', first at the pretty an' then at Fatty, till presently 'e says:

"By the way, boss, you *don't* 'appen to 'ave bin in 'air before wi' that other ruby, eh?"

"What?" says Fatty. "I bin in 'air before? Not I, nor I won't ever come in again neither if you 'ands me out any more o' that macaroni. What yer mean?"

"Well now, that's quair," said the fence. "It's true you didn' remind me of 'im at first, but what with 'avin' the same kind o' stone, an' the same funny mark on yer cheek, it did look a bit odd."

"Mark on me cheek!" said ole Fatty. "By gum! I'll make you a present of it!" An' 'e did too, leavin' a bruise the size of 'is fist on the other fellow's face. Then 'e put the ruby back into its wallet an' walked out of the shop.

'Bein' so full o' whisky as 'e was, 'e didn' think much more o' what the fence 'ad said beyond 'is bein' anxious to get quit o' the stone, till 'e 'appened to drop into a barber's, an' the man 'oo shaved 'im said the same thing about 'is face.

"Where?" asked Fatty, lookin' in the mirror, "I can't see no mark on me cheek. What's it like?"

The man told 'im it was a leetle, lop-sided patch of yellow, like a stain or a burn, just under the bone on the left side.

"Oh, yes," said Fatty, pretendin' to see it. "That's acid. I spilt some there this mornin', but I didn' notice it 'ad made a stain."

The same afternoon three other people told 'im about 'is cheek, yet when 'e got 'ome an' looked in the glass 'e could see nothin'. 'E didn' sleep one wink that night, but it was only by the early mornin' of the next day that 'e began to catch the meanin' of what 'ad come to 'im.

'Then 'e began to sweat with terror, same as I've sweated now for many a long year, an' two days after that the dreams came on again. . . .'

Nightmare Jack stopped, and, though his lips continued to move, it was only after some seconds that I caught the words they uttered. 'Brandy,' he whispered. 'There's a bottle in the cupboard.'

He took a long, difficult drink from the half-pannikin I poured out for him, and after a little while continued.

'It was one day in the nex' week, Fatty tell me, that, as 'e was walkin' along the road towards Tilbury, 'e ran against Cutler—one of the three to bring the jewels 'ome from Burmah.

'Cutler didn' seem as surprise' to meet 'im as 'e might 'ave been some'ow, an' for a minute or two 'e was talkin' about 'is aunt's 'ealth, an' the bad drains, an' the marrows 'e was growin' at 'ome. 'E was lookin' downright seedy, an' presen'ly, when 'e turned 'is face round from the way 'e'd been 'oldin' it all that time, Fatty saw a great patch of plaster on 'is left cheek-bone.

'Then, of course, 'e knew, an' the two o' them compare notes. . . .

'It turned out that what 'ad 'appen to Fatty, 'ad come to Cutler months before, an' seemin'ly to most o' the others too. Leetle by leetle, as 'is dreams got worse an' the terror grew, each of the gang 'ad made up 'is mind to cast about an' find the rest, so that by the time Cutler came upon Fatty on the Tilbury road there was only three of the ten the others couldn' trace.

'Nex' day, Sirs, Cutler took Fatty to meet the rest at the same ole doss-'ouse down at Rother-

hithe. When they got there they found that two o' the missin' three 'ad jus' been foun' an' brought in by Dr. Gill, so there was only one they couldn' track, an' 'e might well be dead. Of the nine fellows that sat shiverin' an' cursin' roun' their liquor in that leetle room upstairs every man-jack carried a face the colour o' bad dough, an' every sweatin' mother's-son 'ad grown as much 'air on 'is cheeks as 'e could raise, except Fatty, 'oo 'adn' thought of it, an' Cutler, 'oose whiskers 'ad come out white an' didn' 'ide the stain.

"They were all in such a stew about what 'ad come to them an' what might 'appen nex' that it 'ardly took more than a bad five minutes an' a couple o' pints o' good brandy to make up their minds to a plan. "Does anyone know a likely man to skipper us out to Burmah with what's left o' the stones, an' to 'old 'is tongue when we're back again?" ask Dr. Gill. "I take it we're all goin', else those 'oo stop be'ind 'll suspect the others."

"Yes," said Fatty. "I do. If you like I can sound 'im this very afternoon, knowin' 'im to be ashore till Sunday."

"There was a leetle discussion then about whether they couldn' take out a ship themselves, an' 'ow they was to restore the stones an' account for those they'd sold already, an' what they could do about the missin' man, but the upshot of it all was that within a quarter of an hour Fatty was walkin' out an' down the street to get 'old o' that chap 'e'd tell of.

'Now, it so 'appen that almost as soon as Fatty 'ad gone out of the room some o' the others suddenly thought o' somethin' important that mus' be

told 'im before 'e spoke to me—for of course, as you've guessed, gents, it was me Fatty 'ad in 'is mind—an' so Dr. Gill sent a fellow called Toby Charteris 'urryin' out after Fatty to try an' catch 'im up with a message before 'e got to the docks where 'e was bound.

'The road which Charteris took was by way of bein' a short cut, an' as 'e was comin' down a narrow alley 'e saw Fatty passin' at a great pace across the end of it along the river-side. 'E saw too that Fatty 'ad seen 'im, for 'e turn 'is 'ead jus' at that moment, but although Toby waved to 'im 'e wouldn' stop, 'an nex' minute was 'idden by a corner of the street.

'Charteris say afterwards, poor brute, that direc'ly 'e caught sight of Fatty scuttlin' along like that, 'e felt some'ow as though cold water was tricklin' down 'is back. There was somethin' quair about Fatty's look that 'e couldn' understan' an' didn' like, an' by the time 'e'd started into a run so as to reach the end of the alley an' get a clear view up the road that ran along the river, 'e caught an idea that made 'im like the look o' things still less. For it come to 'im suddenly that Fatty was *scared*—you see, *scared*—an' was hurryin' away from somebody or somethin'. . . .

'E 'ad 'alf a mind then to turn back, but 'e was at the corner o' the road by this, an' made out Fatty about two 'undred yards a'ead.

'E 'adn' run more than a minute after Fatty before 'e saw 'im doin' a cur'us thing. 'E bent down quick, picked up a bit of paper from the gutter, wrote somethin' on it against a post, an' left it under a stone dead in Toby's path.

'There was nobody else jus' then along the road, and Charteris was sure the paper was a message left for 'im.

'A second or two later 'e come up to it, picked it out from under the stone, an' ran 'is eye over the words upon it. This is what 'e saw:

"For God's sake don't look be'ind you!"

'There was a strong wind blowing out the ebb tide, an' in the fright of what 'e'd read 'e let the paper go. The breeze caught it, an' 'e made a silly grab to stop it. Then, while 'e was watchin' it carairin' down the road, an' while 'e 'ad 'is back turned to the way 'e 'ad been runnin', 'e saw what Fatty must 'ave seen, an' 'e fell down sittin' on 'is 'ams, same as a leetle dog might do, an' began to laugh. . . .

'Upon 'im first of all the ten it 'ad come—the beeg, dirty 'Orror of 'is dreams, an' whilst 'is bones turn to rottenness inside 'im, an' 'is stomach crawl an' swim, 'e squatted an' scrabbled in the dust an' giggled like a girl. . . .

Mon Dieu, 'ow 'e laugh! 'E was laughin' still when 'e got back to the rest at Rother'ithe, an' they cuffed 'im an' kicked 'im an' stuffed a gag in 'is mouth to make 'im stop, 'e was so 'orrible to 'ear.

'Then, all of a sudden, 'e quieted down, an', shiverin' in 'is fear, 'e told them 'ow, when 'e was lookin' after the scrap of paper blowin' in the wind, 'e saw the long, nut-coloured arm an' the pointin' 'and, an' be'ind it, right away in the distance, the *Face* belongin' to it, lookin' down the arm at 'im with its single eye like a man sightin' along the barrel of a rifle. . . . 'E said it was the look of the face that 'ad work the mischief in 'im.

It was such a leetle, clean sort of dry, brown face with never a smile, an' it 'ung so far away, right over the river, lookin' through the masts an' funnels of the shippin'. It would 'ave been better, 'e said, if it 'ad been nearer an' bigger. . . . 'E began to whimper then, an' it was jus' when they were pumpin' stiff brandies into 'im one after the other that Fatty an' I came up the stairs an' into the room.

'Fatty, you see, 'ad escape what 'appen to Toby Charteris. After leavin' the doss-'ouse 'e 'ad chance to look be'ind 'im as 'e walked along the river-side, an' what 'e saw followin' 'im a long way back was not the pointin' 'and or the face, but jus' that one-eyed fellow that 'ad shadow 'im an' the other two all those years back as they dropped below Mandalay. . . . It was enough to scare 'im though, an' 'e felt that what 'ad come to Toby would 'ave come to 'im instead if 'e 'adn' turn 'is 'ead in time an' run. After leavin' the note under the stone 'e came straight on to me, an' mad as I thought 'im when 'e broach 'is business, I thought 'is chums a good deal madder when we pushed open the door 'an found them sittin', swearin' an' 'iccuppin' in a circle with poor Charteris cryin' in the middle.

'They were all shoutin' somethin' that I couldn' rightly catch, but when I saw them pointin' at 'is face I got the 'ang of it. They were all callin' out an' sayin that the yellow mark 'ad leave 'is cheek.'

III

It was here that Nightmare Jack, in a curious extremity of horror, which for some moments I

thought forced and insincere, spoke to us of those hidden things which he supposed to underlie the happenings he narrated.

He told us in a cowering breath of fear of the old, still temple near Mogaung, and of the foul God that tottered there upon its stool. Whilst the wind without raced up against the yellow tide and his face within went grey upon the pillow, that little, whispering man spoke to us—by his frantic hands and eyes as much as by his dying mouth—of the mythos of the Web and Loaf, and the faded terror of the Triple Scum.

I can still remember and record—though it is impossible to convey the slow and loathing horror with which he uttered them—the phrases he employed to make his meaning clear.

The God distributed himself amongst a 'lousy crew' of priests or hierophants, who shared his power and desires and in a sense composed him. Once every year the ruddy-coloured stones that were his essence were taken from him, and two men selected who should sleep for seven nights with the rubies next their skin.

Then they would pass through the sick terms of a novitiate, would bear upon their cheeks the yellow stain, and finally would enter in upon the God and be added to the number of his priests.

Something else at which Nightmare Jack's tongue halted and his soul revolted, something confused and abominable which even his lips refused to utter, must to his mind have lain within the very nature of that cult, but I know he meant that what had come to Toby Charteris as he watched the scrap of paper whirling down the wind

was but the sign and token of reception and approval by the God. . . .

I can hear to-day the laugh, shy, almost apologetic; yet still shaken with that stark and horrid fear, with which the man we four had come to kill went on to build up and complete the explanation of his tale. At times, through all his terror, he might seem to speak with a curious reasonableness and detachment. He wanted us, and especially me, I think, to appreciate his position in the matter. He needed somehow to justify his soul, and his eyes sought mine with an odd, pathetic hunger. . . . As he whispered on I turned to watch the race of muddy water down the river. The wind was risen higher, and the windows drummed like blood against the brain.

He said that the rubies had been stolen just about the time when they should have been removed to make new priests. Fatty had been used to sleep with them in the wallet under his pillow on the journey back. Whether in doing so he hadn't absorbed all the power there was in them Nightmare Jack didn't know, but anyhow there was enough devil left in them to affect the rest. In the ordinary way the God's seed was replaced after it had 'made men,' and whatever juice was left was saved up to next year. He rather fancied that Toby Charteris used to keep his share of the jewels in a skin purse round his loins, and that was why the power worked so strong with him. It was something like vaccination, and 'took' better with some than others.

He rather thought that the old God had been trying to 'receive' one or other of them for a

long time, but had been hindered and delayed by some technical flaw in the procedure. Ordinarily there would be a manifestation or materialization in some human or semi-human form, and it was Nightmare Jack's idea that the one-eyed man from Mandalay was an imperfect attempt in this direction.

Then he went on to hint that those who had been once accepted by the God could themselves 'make priests' and pass along the rottenness with a pointing hand. It was a thing that might spread like the pox till all the world was vile.

And here the man upon the bed began to cringe and huddle on himself. I had to bend my head to his to catch his words. It seemed that, now the evil had 'got loose,' and he had touched the rubies as he would tell us presently, he knew he too was wanted by the God. He repudiated the honour with dismay, for *he* didn't want to become a bloody priest, now *did he, did he?*

Outside the slowly darkening room, as Nightmare Jack resumed his tale, the wind still crept and drummed upon the panes.

IV

'Fatty an' 'is mates stayed talkin' in that room till after midnight, afraid to stir from the 'ouse, an' I, like a fool, stayed with them till the sight o' the crimson pebbles they showed me as proof o' their tale 'ad got burn into my eyes an', yellow patch be 'ang, I'd agree to skipper the precious outfit back to Burmah. As *you* know well enough, gents, I 'appen to be a fair judge o' stones, an' I was ready

to sell my soul rather'n leave those beauties in the 'ands o' ravin' lunatics.'

Nightmare Jack's eyes glistened, and for a moment he stopped whilst his fingers, long and delicate and brown, slid tip over tip as if caressing imaginary gems. His voice was growing slowly weaker, and it was with a painful effort that he took another drink from the pannikin and again took up his tale.

'Well, they mus' 'ave been pretty well mad ever to dream of settin' out to Burmah in a crowd like that, an' I see plainly enough that I was goin' to 'ave 'ell's own trouble to find a ship an' crew an' then to clear 'er from port without suspicion, but I'd got a wad of Dr. Gill's bank notes warm against my 'eart with more to come,—an', besides, I'd seen the rubies. . . .

'After an 'eap o' worry an' delay I got a brig an' a crew to work 'er, not 'oldin' by smokestacks, which were new-fangled in those days.

'In the evenin' before the mornin' we were to sail a strange thing 'appen. Toby Charteris, 'oo'd been fit to die for the las' week or more, rushed past Dr. Gill when 'e unlocked 'is cabin to 'ave a look at 'im, tore up the companion on to the deck, an' ran shriekin' over the gangway on to the wharf. Two of the others followed quick to collar him, but 'e managed to slip them, an' it was near nightfall before 'e came back.

'Then 'e 'ad a quair tale to tell. 'E said that 'e'd been taken by a sort of frenzy, an' 'ad run wild, not knowin' where 'e went, till suddenly 'e woke up an' found 'imself standin' stiff an' straight an' *pointin'* at a man. It was somewhere in the docks

quite near the ship, an' in the evenin' light 'e see the man fall down laughin' upon 'is 'ams an' curl an' shrivel before 'is eyes like a leetle, sun-dried worm. . . .

'The others were so scared when Toby crawled aboard an' told them this that they clapped 'im in irons straight away, fearin' that 'e should start an' point at them. They asked 'im then 'oo it was 'e seen fall down an' laugh like that, but either 'e couldn' or 'e wouldn' say. When we were three days out 'e died—a leetle more'n a month after 'e seen the Face.

'Of course you've guess by this what I'd made up my mind to do almost as soon as I saw the first of the rubies in the doss-'ouse. A couple of nights after Toby died, when we were close-'auled off the coast o' Spain, I took the stones from Dr. Gill's cabin locker, put off with them an' two tough lads in the twenty-three foot sloop I'd been careful to ship before we sailed, an' left the brig with the water pourin' into 'er through a dozen 'oles in 'er bottom.

'We been through dirty weather in the Bay, an' it was a risky thing to do, but I 'ad to act before we passed through the Straits, an' 'ad run close in to land under cover o' dark. I'd 'ave got away alone if I could, but I was force to 'ave Tiny an' Craddock to 'elp me put the rest o' the watch to their long sleep an' then lower away the sloop.

'All that night the three of us ran before a northerly gale under 'alf a jib an' a reefed mainsail, an' at daybreak we made out the landfall to our south-east an' ourselves bearin' away from it a good three points to westward with the wind on

our starboard quarter. "Put 'er about," said Tiny to me, "an' inside o' two hours we'll make the coast."

"Then I put the tiller over sharp, but I never 'auled in on the main sheet as we payed off on the other tack, an' the big boom came swingin' over with a rush. It caught Tiny full in the stomach an' 'e was overboard before 'e could open 'is mouth to yell.

"You done that a' purpose," shouted Craddock, an' the nex' minute 'e an' I were at it 'ammer an' tongs. . . . 'E was a big man, too, an' it might 'ave gone 'ard with me if I 'adn't managed to unship the tiller an' crack 'im with it over the 'ead. That finish 'im, an' 'e went over the side as sweet an' gentle as a bag o' flour. I made land alone an hour or two later, an' worked back to London in a cork boat from Bilbao.'

The man before us was sinking fast. His long recital had drained his energy, but his little, twinkling eyes showed relief at the telling of his tale. Mad he must surely be, yet the story of his crimes at least was likely to be true. . . . Cohen spoke from the growing shadow with a sneer.

'And the rubies; what of them?' he gibed.

Nightmare Jack nodded, and over his face there spread a little, twisted smile that was at the same time almost a snarl of hate.

'Aye,' he muttered, 'the rubies, by Gar, what of them? Reckon they lost all their juice time they come to me. Reckon they must 'ave done. . . . But anyway I was to keep 'em shorter than I figured. Leetle did I think when I scuttled the brig and when I put first Tiny an' then Craddock over the side of the sloop that there was one wait-in' for me at 'ome to rob me o' the stones I'd bought

so dear. Like some beeg, dirty ghost 'e stood smilin' upon the quay, an' when I stepped ashore 'e put 'is arm through mine, an' speakin' so smooth an' soft, "Hello, Jack," 'e says. "You're back quick. *Where's all your mates?* . . ."

'At first I only give 'im a stone or two to keep 'im quiet, an' then, not satisfied with that, "Let's go shares, Jack," 'e says, "an' I promise you no 'arm'll come to you." 'E looked into my eyes as I gave 'im 'alf the rubies, an' I knew 'im then for 'oo 'e was, an' that I should 'ave to give 'im all whenever 'e might nod 'is 'ead.

'Five year an' more 'e followed me easy, 'oldin' me in play like a fish at a line's end, an' all that time 'e never breathed 'is name or dropped an 'int about 'is past, for 'e knew I 'ad no need to ask. An' when 'e smiled an' tapped 'is cheek where the stain 'ad been an' talked so slick an' sweet I would call to mind the man that 'ad been missin' from the ten, an' the fellow that Toby 'ad seen squirmin' in the evenin' light upon the docks, an' I knew that 'e 'ad but to lift 'is arm an' point to turn me too into the crawlin', dirty thing 'e was 'imself.

'For you see, Sirs, that was the way it worked with 'im, the devil in the rubies, an' on what 'ad run like poison into Toby Charteris 'e could only thrive an' batten as if it were 'is natural food. . . . An' then, when all the stones 'ad gone, five year or more ago, 'e went as well, but till this night the look of 'is eyes, an' the sound of 'is voice, an' the very smell of 'is body 'ave never left me, an' every time I stare at myself in the leetle glass upon the nail I wonder if there isn't a yellow stain that only other men can see: . . .

His voice for some time had been growing weaker, but beyond this I had noted the gradual onset and the slow completion of another change. As his story passed from a fantastic pouring-out of crime and terror and turned more and more upon that sinister Companion who seemed to dominate its later stages, it was easy to see where his horror truly lay. For at the first, despite the violence and the power of his telling, there had been something almost borrowed and unreal about his tale, reminding one of the precision of some well-drilled schoolboy who recites his horrors second-hand. Latterly, however, as his eyes had stared out into that dim corner where Gilchrist sat and listened, the slow clenching and unclenching of his hands and the alternate race and falter of his words had half prepared us all for what was still to come.

Crabbe, too, had marked the growing nervousness of the dying man, and he spoke now with a curious, eager tenseness apparent in his tones.

'And since that time you dream?' said he.

'Aye,' whispered Nightmare Jack. 'Since then I dream. Ah, 'ow I dream! . . . Got 'em bad I 'ave. . . . But as for that, by Gar, so 'as 'e! Sometimes, when 'e's told me things, I've seen the fear spread in 'is face, an' it's been meat an' drink to me, an' to-night, to-night, Sirs, we finish quits, though 'e thought to be the one to put me to my sleep. . . .'

His voice, from which but a moment ago the growing weakness seemed to have stolen all the strength, suddenly rang out in a harsh and triumphant yell which tailed off horribly into a sickening choke of terror. With a display of strength nothing

short of marvellous in his exhaustion and his pain he had lifted himself to a sitting posture in the bed and now stared with starting eyeballs at the shadowy form of Gilchrist. Nightmare Jack had raised one hand before his face in a curious, despairing, warding motion, and from behind it, in such an access of mingled hate and dread as I pray heaven I may never hear again, his last words crept out upon an appalling, strangled cry, half whisper and half shriek:

*'Save me ; save me from their bloody Nark. . . .
The man 'oo speaks like a girl an' smells like a goat.
. . . The cat 'as . . .'*

All at once he stopped and fell back against the pillow. Then, as he mouthed and swallowed in a vain effort to continue, our gaze turned to the pallid, lurching figure that had risen from the corner's gloom.

Gilchrist, he whom men called the Nurse, that indecent thing of whose employ the very vilest were ashamed even while they ate his meat, was staggering and swaying in the centre of the room, and, whilst with one hand he still pressed the handkerchief against his wound, with the other he pointed at the writhing form upon the bed.

For a silent moment the two faced each other. Then, with his glazing eyes still fixed on his tormentor, Nightmare Jack dragged from its station at his pillow the huge, complacent body of the cat. With a last flicker of strength he tore at his shirt downwards from the neck and drew one of the animal's front paws in a cruel, jagged line across his heart. After about a second the blood started from his chest in a zigzag, crimson track,



and, with a grin of triumph on his face, his head fell back against the wall, and he slid down dead into the bed.

A little later Gilchrist collapsed in a faint upon the floor.

V

Never a word did the three of us speak as we bore the body of Nightmare Jack out into the dusk where our boat lay waiting, and it was some minutes after we had let it drop over the stern into the seethe and huddle of the flowing tide that Crabbe, looking up slowly from his oar, said:

'What's happened to the other one? Why did he give us the slip do you think after he'd come out of his faint? He followed us down the stairs all right, and we waited for him long enough.'

'Too long,' said Cohen. 'We wait for him no more. His game's been played with us too long. To-morrow night he sleeps with the man he's driven mad. . . .'

It was only a little later, however, as we were passing above Notman's Wharf, that Crabbe drove his oar into something soft and uttered a startled cry. The light from the lantern which I held out over his shoulder flickered for an instant on a whitish object that bobbed and dipped grotesquely in the suck of water at our stern and then faded back along our wake into the blackness of the night. It was a body floating up stream with the making tide, and one glance had been enough for us to recognise the face.

'Gilchrist—as I live!' whispered Cohen. 'Now how, in heaven's name——'

Just then the cat Pongo, which had jumped with us into the boat as we put off, uttered a faint *miaou*, and Cohen swore.

'Of course!' cried he. 'The cat! I see it' now. Gilchrist must have fainted again and fallen into the river and been carried ahead of us by the tide before we managed to get clear. That was a clever trick of Jack's. I was thinking it must have been more than an ordinary scratch. . . .'

'Why,' said Crabbe. 'What do you mean?'

'Mean?' repeated Cohen with a little laugh. 'Why, that Jack had seen us coming and him with us. He made his preparations, that was all. I saw the cat's feet leave blue marks upon the bed. Its claws were poisoned.'

Ten years ago to-day; Crabbe and Cohen gone their ways, and I alone left who can remember the doings of that night to wonder what might be the darker matters that lay behind a madman's ravings. Time passes quickly. . . . And it is strange how soon things are forgotten on the river.

WHERE THEIR FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED

By MAY SINCLAIR

THERE was nobody in the orchard. Harriott Leigh went out, carefully, through the iron gate into the field. She had made the latch slip into its notch without a sound.

The path slanted widely up the field from the orchard gate to the stile under the elder tree. George Waring waited for her there.

Years afterwards, when she thought of George Waring she smelt the sweet, hot, wine-scent of the elder flowers. Years afterwards, when she smelt elder flowers she saw George Waring, with his beautiful, gentle face, like a poet's or a musician's, his black-blue eyes, and sleek, olive-brown hair. He was a naval lieutenant.

Yesterday he had asked her to marry him and she had consented. But her father hadn't, and she had come to tell him that and say good-bye before he left her. His ship was to sail the next day.

He was eager and excited. He couldn't believe that anything could stop their happiness, that anything he didn't want to happen could happen.

'Well?' he said.

'He's a perfect beast, George. He won't let us. He says we're too young.'

'I was twenty last August,' he said, aggrieved.

'And I shall be seventeen in September.'

'And this is June. We're quite old, really. How long does he mean us to wait?'

'Three years.'

'Three years before we can be engaged even—why, we might be dead.'

She put her arms round him to make him feel safe. They kissed; and the sweet, hot, wine-scent of the elder flowers mixed with their kisses. They stood, pressed close together, under the elder tree.

Across the yellow fields of charlock they heard the village clock strike seven. Up in the house a gong clanged.

'Darling, I must go,' she said.

'Oh stay—stay *five* minutes.'

He pressed her close. It lasted five minutes, and five more. Then he was running fast down the road to the station, while Harriott went along the field-path, slowly, struggling with her tears.

'He'll be back in three months,' she said. 'I can live through three months.'

But he never came back. There was something wrong with the engines of his ship, the *Alexandra*. Three weeks later she went down in the Mediterranean, and George with her.

Harriott said she didn't care how soon she died now. She was quite sure it would be soon, because she couldn't live without him.

Five years passed.

The two lines of beech trees stretched on and on, the whole length of the Park, a broad green drive between. When you came to the middle they branched off right and left in the form of a cross, and at the end of the right arm there was a white stucco pavilion with pillars and a three-cornered pediment like a Greek temple. At the end of the

left arm, the west entrance to the Park, double gates and a side door.

Harriott, on her stone seat at the back of the pavilion, could see Stephen Philpotts the very minute he came through the side door.

He had asked her to wait for him there. It was the place he always chose to read his poems aloud in. The poems were a pretext. She knew what he was going to say. And she knew what she would answer.

There were elder bushes in flower at the back of the pavilion, and Harriott thought of George Waring. She told herself that George was nearer to her now than he could ever have been, living. If she married Stephen she would not be unfaithful, because she loved him with another part of herself. It was not as though Stephen were taking George's place. She loved Stephen with her soul, in an unearthly way.

But her body quivered like a stretched wire when the door opened and the young man came towards her down the drive under the beech trees.

She loved him; she loved his slenderness, his darkness and sallow whiteness, his black eyes lighting up with the intellectual flame; the way his black hair swept back from his forehead, the way he walked, tiptoe, as if his feet were lifted with wings.

He sat down beside her. She could see his hands tremble. She felt that her moment was coming; it had come.

'I wanted to see you alone because there's something I must say to you. I don't quite know how to begin. . . .'

Her lips parted. She panted lightly.

'You've heard me speak of Sybill Foster?'

Her voice came stammering, 'N-no, Stephen. Did you?'

'Well, I didn't mean to, till I knew it was all right. I only heard yesterday.'

'Heard what?'

'Why, that she'll have me. Oh, Harriott—do you know what it's like to be terribly happy?'

She knew. She had known just now, the moment before he told her. She sat there, stone-cold and stiff, listening to his raptures; listening to her own voice saying she was glad.

Ten years passed.

Harriott Leigh sat waiting in the drawing-room of a small house in Maida Vale. She had lived there ever since her father's death two years before.

She was restless. She kept on looking at the clock to see if it was four, the hour that Oscar Wade had appointed. She was not sure that he would come, after she had sent him away yesterday.

She now asked herself, why, when she had sent him away yesterday, she had let him come to-day. Her motives were not altogether clear. If she really meant what she had said then, she oughtn't to let him come to her again. Never again.

She had shown him plainly what she meant. She could see herself, sitting very straight in her chair, uplifted by a passionate integrity, while he stood before her, hanging his head, ashamed and beaten; she could feel again the throb in her voice as she kept on saying that she couldn't, she couldn't; he must see that she couldn't; that no, nothing would make her change her mind;

she couldn't forget he had a wife; that he must think of Muriel.

To which he had answered savagely: 'I needn't. That's all over. We only live together for the look of the thing.'

And she, serenely, with great dignity: 'And for the look of the thing, Oscar, we must leave off seeing each other. Please go.'

'Do you mean it?'

'Yes. We must never see each other again.'

And he had gone then, ashamed and beaten.

She could see him, squaring his broad shoulders to meet the blow. And she was sorry for him. She told herself she had been unnecessarily hard. Why shouldn't they see each other again, now he understood where they must draw the line? Until yesterday the line had never been very clearly drawn. To-day she meant to ask him to forget what he had said to her. Once it was forgotten, they could go on being friends as if nothing had happened.

It was four o'clock. Half-past. Five. She had finished tea and given him up when, between the half-hour and six o'clock, he came.

He came as he had come a dozen times, with his measured, deliberate, thoughtful tread, carrying himself well braced, with a sort of held-in arrogance, his great shoulders heaving. He was a man of about forty, broad and tall, lean-flanked and short-necked, his straight, handsome features showing small and even in the big square face and in the flush that swamped it. The close-clipped, reddish-brown moustache bristled forwards from the pushed-out upper lip. His small, flat eyes shone, reddish-brown, eager and animal.

She liked to think of him when he was not there, but always at the first sight of him she felt a slight shock. Physically, he was very far from her admired ideal. So different from George Waring and Stephen Philpotts.

He sat down, facing her.

There was an embarrassed silence, broken by Oscar Wade.

'Well, Harriott, you said I could come.' He seemed to be throwing the responsibility on her.

'So I suppose you've forgiven me,' he said.

'Oh, yes, Oscar, I've forgiven you.'

He said she'd better show it by coming to dine with him somewhere that evening.

She could give no reason to herself for going. She simply went.

He took her to a restaurant in Soho. Oscar Wade dined well, even extravagantly, giving each dish its importance. She liked his extravagance. He had none of the mean virtues.

It was over. His flushed, embarrassed silence told her what he was thinking. But when he had seen her home he left her at her garden gate. He had thought better of it.

She was not sure whether she were glad or sorry. She had had her moment of righteous exaltation and she had enjoyed it. But there was no joy in the weeks that followed it. She had given up Oscar Wade because she didn't want him very much; and now she wanted him furiously, perversely, because she had given him up. Though he had no resemblance to her ideal, she couldn't live without him.

She dined with him again and again, till she knew Schnebler's Restaurant by heart, the white

panelled walls picked out with gold; the white pillars, and the curling gold fronds of their capitals; the Turkey carpets, blue and crimson, soft under her feet; the thick crimson velvet cushions, that clung to her skirts; the glitter of silver and glass on the innumerable white circles of the tables. And the faces of the diners, red, white, pink, brown, grey and sallow, distorted and excited; the curled mouths that twisted as they ate; the convoluted electric bulbs pointing, pointing down at them, under the red, crinkled shades. All shimmering in a thick air that the red light stained as wine stains water.

And Oscar's face, flushed with his dinner. Always, when he leaned back from the table and brooded in silence she knew what he was thinking. His heavy eyelids would lift; she would find his eyes fixed on hers, wondering, considering.

She knew now what the end would be. She thought of George Waring, and Stephen Philpotts, and of her life, cheated. She hadn't chosen Oscar, she hadn't really wanted him; but now he had forced himself on her she couldn't afford to let him go. Since George died no man had loved her, no other man ever would. And she was sorry for him when she thought of him going from her, beaten and ashamed.

She was certain, before he was, of the end. Only she didn't know when and where and how it would come. That was what Oscar knew.

It came at the close of one of their evenings when they had dined in a private sitting-room. He said he couldn't stand the heat and noise of the public restaurant.

She went before him, up a steep, red-carpeted stair to a white door on the second landing.

From time to time they repeated the furtive, hidden adventure. Sometimes she met him in the room above Schnebler's. Sometimes, when her maid was out, she received him at her house in Maida Vale. But that was dangerous, not to be risked too often.

Oscar declared himself unspeakably happy. Harriott was not quite sure. This was love, the thing she had never had, that she had dreamed of, hungered, and thirsted for; but now she had it she was not satisfied. Always she looked for something just beyond it, some mystic, heavenly rapture, always beginning to come, that never came. There was something about Oscar that repelled her. But because she had taken him for her lover, she couldn't bring herself to admit that it was a certain coarseness. She looked another way and pretended it wasn't there. To justify herself, she fixed her mind on his good qualities, his generosity, his strength, the way he had built up his engineering business. She made him take her over his works and show her his great dynamos. She made him lend her the books he read. But always, when she tried to talk to him, he let her see that *that* wasn't what she was there for.

'My dear girl, we haven't time,' he said. 'It's waste of our priceless moments.'

She persisted. 'There's something wrong about it all if we can't talk to each other.'

He was irritated. 'Women never seem to consider that a man can get all the talk he wants from other men. What's wrong is our meeting in this

unsatisfactory way. We ought to live together. It's the only sane thing. I would, only I don't want to break up Muriel's home and make her miserable.'

'I thought you said she wouldn't care.'

'My dear, she cares for her home and her position and the children. You forget the children.'

Yes. She had forgotten the children. She had forgotten Muriel. She had left off thinking of Oscar as a man with a wife and children and a home.

He had a plan. His mother-in-law was coming to stay with Muriel in October and he would get away. He would go to Paris, and Harriott should come to him there. He could say he went on business. No need to lie about it; he *had* business in Paris.

He engaged rooms in an hotel in the rue de Rivoli. They spent two weeks there.

For three days Oscar was madly in love with Harriott and Harriott with him. As she lay awake she would turn on the light and look at him as he slept at her side. Sleep made him beautiful and innocent; it laid a fine, smooth tissue over his coarseness; it made his mouth gentle; it entirely hid his eyes.

In six days reaction had set in. At the end of the tenth day, Harriott, returning with Oscar from Montmartre, burst into a fit of crying. When questioned, she answered wildly that the Hotel Saint Pierre was too hideously ugly; it was getting on her nerves. Mercifully Oscar explained her state as fatigue following excitement. She tried hard to believe that she was miserable because her love was purer and more spiritual than Oscar's; but all the time she knew perfectly well she had

cried from pure boredom. She was in love with Oscar, and Oscar bored her. Oscar was in love with her, and she bored him. At close quarters, day in and day out, each was revealed to the other as an incredible bore.

At the end of the second week she began to doubt whether she had ever been really in love with him.

Her passion returned for a little while after they got back to London. Freed from the unnatural strain which Paris had put on them, they persuaded themselves that their romantic temperaments were better fitted to the old life of casual adventure.

Then, gradually, the sense of danger began to wake in them. They lived in perpetual fear, face to face with all the chances of discovery. They tormented themselves and each other by imagining possibilities that they would never have considered in their first fine moments. It was as though they were beginning to ask themselves if it were, after all, worth while running such awful risks, for all they got out of it. Oscar still swore that if he had been free he would have married her. He pointed out that his intentions at any rate were regular. But she asked herself: Would I marry *him*? Marriage would be the Hotel Saint Pierre all over again, without any possibility of escape. But, if she wouldn't marry him, was she in love with him? That was the test. Perhaps it was a good thing he wasn't free. Then she told herself that these doubts were morbid, and that the question wouldn't arise.

One evening Oscar called to see her. He had come to tell her that Muriel was ill.

'Seriously ill?'

'I'm afraid so. It's pleurisy. May turn to pneumonia. We shall know one way or another in the next few days.'

A terrible fear seized upon Harriott. Muriel might die of her pleurisy; and if Muriel died, she would have to marry Oscar. He was looking at her queerly, as if he knew what she was thinking, and she could see that the same thought had occurred to him and that he was frightened too.

Muriel got well again; but their danger had enlightened them. Muriel's life was now inconceivably precious to them both; she stood between them and that permanent union, which they dreaded and yet would not have the courage to refuse.

After enlightenment the rupture.

It came from Oscar, one evening when he sat with her in her drawing-room.

'Harriott,' he said, 'do you know I'm thinking seriously of settling down?'

'How do you mean, settling down?'

'Patching it up with Muriel, poor girl. . . . Has it never occurred to you that this little affair of ours can't go on for ever?'

'You don't want it to go on?'

'I don't want to have any humbug about it. For God's sake, let's be straight. If it's done, it's done. Let's end it decently.'

'I see. You want to get rid of me.'

'That's a beastly way of putting it.'

'Is there any way that isn't beastly? The whole thing's beastly. I should have thought you'd have stuck to it now you've made it what you wanted. When I haven't an ideal, I haven't a single illusion, when you've destroyed everything you didn't want.'

'What didn't I want?'

'The clean, beautiful part of it. The part *I* wanted.'

'My part at least was real. It was cleaner and more beautiful than all that putrid stuff you wrapped it up in. You were a hypocrite, Harriott, and I wasn't. You're a hypocrite now if you say you weren't happy with me.'

'I was never really happy. Never for one moment. There was always something I missed. Something you didn't give me. Perhaps you couldn't.'

'No. I wasn't spiritual enough,' he sneered.

'You werenot. And you made me what you were.'

'Oh, I noticed that you were always very spiritual, *after* you'd got what you wanted.'

'What I wanted?' she cried. 'Oh, my God——'

'If you ever knew what you wanted.'

'What—I—wanted,' she repeated, drawing out her bitterness.

'Come,' he said, 'why not be honest? Face facts. I was awfully gone on you. You were awfully gone on me—once. We got tired of each other and it's over. But at least you might own we had a good time while it lasted.'

'A good time?'

'Good enough for me.'

'For you, because for you love only means one thing. Everything that's high and noble in it you dragged down to that, till there's nothing left for us but that. *That's* what you made of love.'

Twenty years passed.

It was Oscar who died first, three years after the

rupture. He did it suddenly one evening, falling down in a fit of apoplexy.

His death was an immense relief to Harriott. Perfect security had been impossible as long as he was alive. But now there wasn't a living soul who knew her secret.

Still, in the first moment of shock Harriott told herself that Oscar dead would be nearer to her than ever. She forgot how little she had wanted him to be near her, alive. And long before the twenty years had passed she had contrived to persuade herself that he had never been near her at all. It was incredible that she had ever known such a person as Oscar Wade. As for their affair, she couldn't think of Harriott Leigh as the sort of woman to whom such a thing could happen. Schnebler's and the Hotel Saint Pierre ceased to figure among prominent images of her past. Her memories, if she had allowed herself to remember, would have clashed disagreeably with the reputation for sanctity which she had now acquired.

For Harriott at fifty-two was the friend and helper of the Reverend Clement Farmer, Vicar of St. Mary the Virgin's, Maida Vale. She worked as a deaconess in his parish, wearing the uniform of a deaconess, the semi-religious gown, the cloak, the bonnet and veil, the cross and rosary, the holy smile. She was also secretary to the Maida Vale and Kilburn Home for Fallen Girls.

Her moments of excitement came when Clement Farmer, the lean, austere likeness of Stephen Philpotts, in his cassock and lace-bordered surplice, issued from the vestry, when he mounted the pulpit, when he stood before the altar rails and lifted

up his arms in the Benediction; her moments of ecstasy when she received the Sacrament from his hands. And she had moments of calm happiness when his study door closed on their communion. All these moments were saturated with a solemn holiness.

And they were insignificant compared with the moment of her dying.

She lay dozing in her white bed under the black crucifix with the ivory Christ. The basins and medicine bottles had been cleared from the table by her pillow; it was spread for the last rites. The priest moved quietly about the room, arranging the candles, the Prayer Book and the Holy Sacrament. Then he drew a chair to her bedside and watched with her, waiting for her to come up out of her doze.

She woke suddenly. Her eyes were fixed upon him. She had a flash of lucidity. She was dying, and her dying made her supremely important to Clement Farmer.

'Are you ready?' he asked.

'Not yet. I think I'm afraid. Make me not afraid.' He rose and lit the two candles on the altar. He took down the crucifix from the wall and stood it against the foot-rail of the bed.

She sighed. That was not what she had wanted. 'You will not be afraid now,' he said.

'I'm not afraid of the hereafter. I suppose you get used to it. Only it may be terrible just at first.'

'Our first state will depend very much on what we are thinking of at our last hour.'

'There'll be my—confession', she said.

'And after it you will receive the Sacrament.'

Then you will have your mind fixed firmly upon God and your Redeemer. . . . Do you feel able to make your confession now, Sister? Everything is ready.'

Her mind went back over her past and found Oscar Wade there. She wondered: should she confess to him about Oscar Wade? One moment she thought it was possible; the next she knew that she couldn't. She could not. It wasn't necessary. For twenty years he had not been part of her life. No. She wouldn't confess about Oscar Wade. She had been guilty of other sins.

She made a careful selection.

'I have cared too much for the beauty of this world. . . . I have failed in charity to my poor girls. Because of my intense repugnance to their sin. . . . I have thought, often, about people I love, when I should have been thinking about God.'

After that she received the Sacrament.

'Now,' he said, 'there is nothing to be afraid of.'

'I won't be afraid if—if you would hold my hand.'

He held it. And she lay still a long time, with her eyes shut. Then he heard her murmuring something. He stooped close.

'This—is—dying. I thought it would be horrible. And it's bliss. . . . Bliss.'

The priest's hand slackened, as if at the bidding of some wonder. She gave a weak cry.

'Oh—don't let me go.'

His grasp tightened.

'Try,' he said, 'to think about God. Keep on looking at the crucifix.'

'If I look, she whispered, 'you won't let go my hand?'

'I will not let you go.'

He held it till it was wrenched from him in the last agony.

She lingered for some hours in the room where these things had happened.

Its aspect was familiar and yet unfamiliar, and slightly repugnant to her. The altar, the crucifix, the lighted candles, suggested some tremendous and awful experience the details of which she was not able to recall. She seemed to remember that they had been connected in some way with the sheeted body on the bed; but the nature of the connection was not clear; and she did not associate the dead body with herself. When the nurse came in and laid it out, she saw that it was the body of a middle-aged woman. Her own living body was that of a young woman of about thirty-two.

Her mind had no past and no future, no sharp-edged coherent memories, and no idea of anything to be done next.

Then, suddenly, the room began to come apart before her eyes, to split into shafts of floor and furniture and ceiling that shifted and were thrown by their commotion into different planes. They leaned slanting at every possible angle; they crossed and overlaid each other with a transparent mingling of dislocated perspectives, like reflections fallen on an interior seen behind glass.

The bed and the sheeted body slid away somewhere out of sight. She was standing by the door that still remained in position.

She opened it and found herself in the street, outside a building of yellowish-grey brick and

freestone, with a tall slated spire. Her mind came together with a palpable click of recognition. This object was the Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Maidæ Vale. She could hear the droning of the organ. She opened the door and slipped in.

She had gone back into a definite space and time, and recovered a certain limited section of coherent memory. She remembered the rows of pitch-pine benches, with their Gothic peaks and mouldings; the stone-coloured walls and pillars with their chocolate stencilling; the hanging rings of lights along the aisles of the nave; the high altar with its lighted candles, and the polished brass cross, twinkling. These things were somehow permanent and real, adjusted to the image that now took possession of her.

She knew what she had come there for. The service was over. The choir had gone from the chancel; the sacristan moved before the altar, putting out the candles. She walked up the middle aisle to a seat that she knew under the pulpit. She knelt down and covered her face with her hands. Peeping sideways through her fingers, she could see the door of the vestry on her left at the end of the north aisle. She watched it steadily.

Up in the organ loft the organist drew out the Recessional, slowly and softly, to its end in the two solemn, vibrating chords.

The vestry door opened and Clement Farmer came out, dressed in his black cassock. He passed before her, close, close outside the bench where she knelt. He paused at the opening. He was waiting for her. There was something he had to say.

She stood up and went towards him. He still

waited. He didn't move to make way for her. She came close, closer than she had ever come to him, so close that his features grew indistinct. She bent her head back, peering, short-sightedly, and found herself looking into Oscar Wade's face.

He stood still, horribly still, and close, barring her passage.

She drew back; his heaving shoulders followed her. He leaned forward, covering her with his eyes. She opened her mouth to scream and no sound came.

She was afraid to move lest he should move with her. The heaving of his shoulders terrified her.

One by one the lights in the side aisles were going out. The lights in the middle aisle would go next. They had gone. If she didn't get away she would be shut up with him there, in the appalling darkness.

She turned and moved towards the north aisle, groping, steadying herself by the book ledge.

When she looked back, Oscar Wade was not there.

Then she remembered that Oscar Wade was dead. Therefore, what she had seen was not Oscar. It was his ghost. He was dead; dead seventeen years ago. She was safe from him for ever.

When she came out on to the steps of the church she saw that the road it stood in had changed. It was not the road she remembered. The pavement on this side was raised slightly and covered in. It ran under a succession of arches. It was a long gallery walled with glittering shop windows on one side; on the other a line of tall grey columns divided it from the street.

She was going along the arcades of the rue de Rivoli. Ahead of her she could see the edge of an immense grey pillar jutting out. That was the porch of the Hotel Saint Pierre. The revolving glass doors swung forward to receive her; she crossed the grey, sultry vestibule under the pillared arches. She knew it. She knew the porter's shining, wine-coloured mahogany pen on her left, and the shining wine-coloured mahogany barrier of the clerk's bureau on her right; she made straight for the great grey carpeted staircase; she climbed the endless flights that turned round and round the caged-in shaft of the well, past the latticed doors of the lift, and came up on to a landing that she knew, and into the long, ash-grey, foreign corridor lit by a dull window at one end.

It was there that the horror of the place came on her. She had no longer any memory of St. Mary's Church, so that she was unaware of her backward course through time. All space and time were here.

She remembered she had to go to the left, the left.

But there was something there; where the corridor turned by the window; at the end of all the corridors. If she went the other way she would escape it.

The corridor stopped there. A blank wall. She was driven back past the stairhead to the left.

At the corner, by the window, she turned down another long ash-grey corridor on her right, and to the right again where the night-light sputtered on the table-flap at the turn.

This third corridor was dark and secret and depraved. She knew the soiled walls and the warped

door at the end. There was a sharp-pointed streak of light at the top. She could see the number on it now, 107.

Something had happened there. If she went in it would happen again.

Oscar Wade was in the room waiting for her behind the closed door. She felt him moving about in there. She leaned forward, her ear to the key-hole, and listened. She could hear the measured, deliberate, thoughtful footsteps. They were coming from the bed to the door.

She turned and ran; her knees gave way under her; she sank and ran on, down the long grey corridors and the stairs, quick and blind, a hunted beast seeking for cover, hearing his feet coming after her.

The revolving doors caught her and pushed her out into the street.

The strange quality of her state was this, that it had no time. She remembered dimly that there had once been a thing called time; but she had forgotten altogether what it was like. She was aware of things happening and about to happen; she fixed them by the place they occupied, and measured their duration by the space she went through.

So now she thought: If I could only go back and get to the place where it hadn't happened.

To get back farther—

She was walking now on a white road that went between broad grass borders. To the right and left were the long raking lines of the hills, curve after curve, shimmering in a thin mist.

The road dropped to the green valley. It mounted the humped bridge over the river. Beyond it she

saw the twin gables of the grey house pricked up over the high, grey garden wall. The tall iron gate stood in front of it between the ball-topped stone pillars.

And now she was in a large, low ceilinged room with drawn blinds. She was standing before the wide double bed. It was her father's bed. The dead body, stretched out in the middle under the drawn white sheet, was her father's body.

The outline of the sheet sank from the peak of the upturned toes to the shin bone, and from the high bridge of the nose to the chin.

She lifted the sheet and folded it back across the breast of the dead man. The face she saw then was Oscar Wade's face, stilled and smoothed in the innocence of sleep, the supreme innocence of death. She stared at it, fascinated, in a cold, pitiless joy.

Oscar was dead.

She remembered how he used to lie like that beside her in the room in the Hotel Saint Pierre, on his back with his hands folded on his waist, his mouth half open, his big chest rising and falling. If he was dead, it would never happen again. She would be safe.

The dead face frightened her, and she was about to cover it up again when she was aware of a light heaving, a rhythmical rise and fall. As she drew the sheet up tighter, the hands under it began to struggle convulsively, the broad ends of the fingers appeared above the edge, clutching it to keep it down. The mouth opened; the eyes opened; the whole face stared back at her in a look of agony and horror.

Then the body drew itself forwards from the hips and sat up, its eyes peering into her eyes;

he and she remained for an instant motionless, each held there by the other's fear.

Suddenly she broke away, turned and ran, out of the room, out of the house.

She stood at the gate, looking up and down the road, not knowing by which way she must go to escape Oscar. To the right, over the bridge and up the hill and across the downs she would come to the arcades of the rue de Rivoli and the dreadful grey corridors of the hotel. To the left the road went through the village.

If she could get further back she would be safe, out of Oscar's reach. Standing by her father's death-bed she had been young, but not young enough. She must get back to the place where she was younger still, to the Park and the green drive under the beech trees and the white pavilion at the cross. She knew how to find it. At the end of the village the high road ran right and left, east and west, under the Park walls; the south gate stood there at the top, looking down the narrow street.

She ran towards it through the village, past the long grey barns of Goodyer's farm, past the grocer's shop, past the yellow front and blue sign of the 'Queen's Head,' past the post office, with its one black window blinking under its vine, past the church and the yew-trees in the churchyard, to where the south gate made a delicate black pattern on the green grass.

These things appeared insubstantial, drawn back behind a sheet of air that shimmered over them like thin glass. They opened out, floated past and away from her; and instead of the high road and park walls she saw a London street of dingy white

façades, and instead of the south gate the swinging glass doors of Schnebler's Restaurant.

The glass doors swung open and she passed into the restaurant. The scene beat on her with the hard impact of reality: the white and gold panels, the white pillars and their curling gold capitals, the white circles of the tables, glittering, the flushed faces of the diners, moving mechanically.

She was driven forward by some irresistible compulsion to a table in the corner, where a man sat alone. The table napkin he was using hid his mouth, and jaw, and chest; and she was not sure of the upper part of the face above the straight, drawn edge. It dropped; and she saw Oscar Wade's face. She came to him, dragged, without power to resist; she sat down beside him, and he leaned to her over the table; she could feel the warmth of his red, congested face; the smell of wine floated towards her on his thick whisper.

'I knew you would come.'

She ate and drank with him in silence, nibbling and sipping slowly, staving off the abominable moment it would end in.

At last they got up and faced each other. His long bulk stood before her, above her; she could almost feel the vibration of its power.

'Come,' he said. 'Come.'

And she went before him, slowly, slipping out through the maze of the tables, hearing behind her Oscar's measured, deliberate, thoughtful tread. The steep, red-carpeted staircase rose up before her.

She swerved from it, but he turned her back.

'You know the way,' he said.

WHERE THEIR FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED 481

At the top of the flight she found the white door of the room she knew. She knew the long windows guarded by drawn muslin blinds; the gilt looking-glass over the chimney-piece that reflected Oscar's head and shoulders grotesquely between two white porcelain babies with bulbous limbs and garlanded loins, she knew the sprawling stain on the drab carpet by the table, the shabby, infamous couch behind the screen.

They moved about the room, turning and turning in it like beasts in a cage, uneasy, inimical, avoiding each other.

At last they stood still, he at the window, she at the door, the length of the room between.

'It's no good your getting away like that,' he said. 'There couldn't be any other end to it—to what we did.'

'But that *was* ended.'

'Ended there, but not here.'

'Ended for ever. We've done with it for ever.'

'We haven't. We've got to begin again. And go on. And go on.'

'Oh, no. No. Anything but that.'

'There isn't anything else.'

'We can't. We can't. Don't you remember how it bored us?'

'Remember? Do you suppose I'd touch you if I could help it? . . . That's what we're here for. We must. We must.'

'No. No. I shall get away—now.'

She turned to the door to open it.

'You can't,' he said. 'The door's locked.'

'Oscar—what did you do that for?'

'We always did it. Don't you remember?'

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She turned to the door again and shook it; she beat on it with her hands.

'It's no use, Harriott. If you got out now you'd only have to come back again. You might stave it off for an hour or so, but what's that in an immortality?'

'Immortality?'

'That's what we're in for.'

'Time enough to talk about immortality when we're dead. . . . Ah—'

They were being drawn towards each other across the room, moving slowly, like figures in some monstrous and appalling dance, their heads thrown back over their shoulders, their faces turned from the horrible approach. Their arms rose slowly, heavy with intolerable reluctance; they stretched them out towards each other, aching, as if they held up an overpowering weight. Their feet dragged and were drawn.

Suddenly her knees sank under her; she shut her eyes; all her being went down before him in darkness and terror.

It was over. She had got away, she was going back, back, to the green drive of the Park, between the beech trees, where Oscar had never been, where he would never find her. When she passed through the south gate her memory became suddenly young and clean. She forgot the rue de Rivoli and the Hotel Saint Pierre; she forgot Schnebler's Restaurant and the room at the top of the stairs. She was back in her youth. She was Harriott Leigh going to wait for Stephen Philpotts in the pavilion opposite the west gate. She could feel

herself, a slender figure moving fast over the grass between the lines of the great beech trees. The freshness of her youth was upon her.

She came to the heart of the drive where it branched right and left in the form of a cross. At the end of the right arm the white Greek temple, with its pediment and pillars, gleamed against the wood.

She was sitting on their seat at the back of the pavilion, watching the side door that Stephen would come in by.

The door was pushed open; he came towards her, light and young, skimming between the beech trees with his eager, tiptoeing stride. She rose up to meet him. She gave a cry.

'Stephen!'

It had been Stephen. She had seen him coming. But the man who stood before her between the pillars of the pavilion was Oscar Wade.

And now she was walking along the field-path that slanted from the orchard door to the stile; further and further back, to where young George Waring waited for her under the elder tree. The smell of the elder flowers came to her over the field. She could feel on her lips and in all her body the sweet, innocent excitement of her youth.

'George, oh, George!'

As she went along the field-path she had seen him. But the man who stood waiting for her under the elder tree was Oscar Wade.

'I told you it's no use getting away, Harriott. Every path brings you back to me. You'll find me at every turn.'

'But how did you get *here*?'

'As I got into the pavilion. As I got into your father's room, on to his deathbed. Because I *was* there. I am in all your memories.'

'My memories are innocent. How could you take my father's place, and Stephen's, and George Waring's? You?'

'Because I did take them.'

'Never. My love for *them* was innocent.'

'Your love for me was part of it. You think the past affects the future. Has it never struck you that the future may affect the past? In your innocence there was the beginning of your sin. You *were* what you *were to be*.'

'I shall get away,' she said.

'And, this time, I shall go with you.'

The stile, the elder tree, and the field floated away from her. She was going under the beech trees down the Park drive towards the south gate and the village, slinking close to the right-hand row of trees. She was aware that Oscar Wade was going with her under the left-hand row, keeping even with her, step by step, and tree by tree. And presently there was grey pavement under her feet and a row of grey pillars on her right hand. They were walking side by side down the rue de Rivoli towards the hotel.

They were sitting together now on the edge of the dingy white bed. Their arms hung by their sides, heavy and limp, their heads drooped, averted. Their passion weighed on them with the unbearable, unescapable boredom of immortality.

'Oscar—how long will it last?'

'I can't tell you. I don't know whether *this* is one moment of eternity, or the eternity of one moment.'

'It must end some time,' she said. 'Life doesn't go on for ever. We shall die.'

'Die? We *have* died. Don't you know what this is? Don't you know where you are? This is death. We're dead, Harriott. We're in hell.'

'Yes. There can't be anything worse than this.'

'This isn't the worst. We're not quite dead yet, as long as we've life in us to turn and run and get away from each other; as long as we can escape into our memories. But when you've got back to the farthest memory of all and there's nothing beyond it—when there's no memory but this—in the last hell we shall not run away any longer; we shall find no more roads, no more passages, no more open doors. We shall have no need to look for each other. In the last death we shall be shut up in this room, behind that locked door, together. We shall lie here together, for ever and ever, joined so fast that even God can't put us asunder. We shall be one flesh and one spirit, one sin repeated for ever and ever; spirit loathing flesh, flesh loathing spirit; you and I loathing each other.'

'Why? Why?' she cried.

'Because that's all that's left us. That's what you made of love.'

The darkness came down swamping, it blotted out the room. She was walking along a garden path between high borders of phlox and larkspur and lupin. They were taller than she was, their flowers swayed and nodded above her head. She tugged at the tall stems and had no strength to break them. She was a little thing.

She said to herself then that she was safe. She

had gone back so far that she was a child again; she had the blank innocence of childhood. To be a child, to go small under the heads of the lupins, to be blank and innocent, without memory, was to be safe.

The walk led her out through a yew hedge on to a bright green lawn. In the middle of the lawn there was a shallow round pond in a ring of rockery cushioned with small flowers, yellow and white and purple. Gold-fish swam in the olive brown water. She would be safe when she saw the gold-fish swimming towards her. The old one with the white scales would come up first, pushing up his nose, making bubbles in the water.

At the bottom of the lawn there was a privet hedge cut by a broad path that went through the orchard. She knew what she would find there; her mother was in the orchard. She would lift her up in her arms to play with the hard red balls of the apples that hung from the tree. She had got back to the farthest memory of all; there was nothing beyond it.

There would be an iron gate in the wall of the orchard. It would lead into a field.

Something was different here, something had frightened her. An ash-grey door instead of an iron gate.

She pushed it open and came into the last corridor of the Hotel Saint Pierre.

THE ANCIENT SIN

By MICHAEL ARLEN

I

GEORGE TARLYON and I were engaged to stay the week-end with Aubrey Carlyle at Malmanor Hall, which is four hours by car from Hyde Park Corner, though that, of course, rather depends on the kind of car. George Tarlyon's—as that Armenian fellow had noticed—was a good car, long and low, a chap's car, and we had run four-fifths of our distance very well: we had flashed through a town, whose name is of no interest, and had plunged into the peculiar wood of Carmion, which shrouds the southern border of the domain of Malmanor. We were therefore on the last lap, and the fact that this lay through Carmion Wood lent a certain interest to it; for although Tarlyon and I had very often stayed with Aubrey Carlyle at Malmanor, we had never, somehow, really penetrated into Carmion. I don't know why, but it just hadn't happened; and George Tarlyon was now running his car along the broad sweep of its central and only road because of a vague idea that it was a short cut as compared to the main road. It was a rotten idea, that of George Tarlyon's.

One of the many silly legends about Carmion Wood is that only foreigners may hear the singing of the birds therein, while for Englishmen there is no sound but the rustling of the leaves and the sighing of the boughs. How that sort of nonsense

ever gets hold of a countryside, I don't know. And the fact that, as George Tarlyon rushed the car along the twilight road—for although it was a bright summer's day, the leaves are very thick on Carmion trees—we could hear no birds singing was, without a doubt, simply because they were singing somewhere else that afternoon. 'Obviously,' I said to Tarlyon, who had suggested that had I had a Spanish mother I could now be enjoying the sweet trilling of rooks and the back-chat of blackbirds, 'obviously they can't always be singing in one place.'

'Listen,' said George Tarlyon, and when you listened it really was rather curious, the silence of Carmion Wood. 'Quiet we call silence, the merest word of all,' some one has written, Poe, I think; but that word applied very fully to Carmion, it was so silent! If only there had been a wind, just to give the leaves a little fun! But there wasn't a breath, it was a close day in August, and the wood was a crypt, that's what it was. I said so to Tarlyon, but all he said was that he was hungry. Later on he grunted: 'You and your crypts!'

'It's a pity,' I said reasonably, 'that the sun doesn't get a bit further into this place. . . .'

'Dolorous is the word for it,' murmured Tarlyon; and he was quite right, amazingly right. 'Dolorous' was certainly the word for it.

'Open your cut-out, man!' I said at last, for the car was really too well-bred. And with a twist of his foot he opened the cut-out. What a cut-out! But it did make things seem more homely.

II

The car rushed on. . . . The straight road under the thick tapestry of leaves would take us directly to the parkland of Malmanor; through the opening at the end, for Carmion Wood ends sharply, we could see in the far distance, lying in the hollow of the country like an ancient pink jewel in a green bowl, the vast Elizabethan pile of Malmanor Hall.

The car rushed on . . .

'Bang!' said the car, but Tarlyon said worse than that as he pulled up.

'This,' I said, as we looked at the flattened back tyre, 'this comes of taking short cuts.'

The matter with Tarlyon was that he had no luncheon and was hungry. Now George Tarlyon is my greatest friend, but this I had against him, that he swore too much. Like many other men, decent men, he swore too much and too often. I can say 'damn' with any man, I have said 'bloody,' and will again when it is organic to the occasion, but what humorous writers in the magazines call scientific swearing does not amuse me. I do not wish to seem superior, but it just does not amuse me. In the Middle Ages men swore mightily on the names of the Trinity and the Saints, but then they believed mightily in the Trinity and the Saints. Now men swear and curse on the names of everything and believe in nothing. It is the habit of the modern world; it is the habit of being in a hurry; it is the habit of unholiness. And it had grown on my friend; George Almeric St. George Tarlyon, who was otherwise a reasonable sort of man.

To put on the spare tyre was only the work of a

few minutes; and again the car rushed on. . . . and from behind us came a cry. I looked back, and there, twenty yards behind us, stood and screamed a woman by the roadway.

Tarlyon was really remarkably fluent as he reversed. He was hungry, you see.

'We must have dropped something,' I suggested.

We drew abreast of the gesticulating woman on the coarse grass by the road. She was just a slip of an aged woman, and her hair was made of bits of gray string, and her eyes leapt hysterically out of a little, lined face. 'Come, come!' she was screaming. 'Come, come quick!' She smelt old, that woman.

The car had scarcely stopped abreast of her when she turned and scampered away along a little lane between the tall, still trees. It was extraordinary, the way she ran, that little old woman! 'Come, come quick!'

Well, there was nothing to do but to follow.

'The girl's mad,' snarled Tarlyon, as he strode after the little old woman. But striding was no use, it was a running job, and it was a hot day.

It was an untidy, tangled path up which she was leading us—and how quickly she ran, that little old woman, stumbling over her uncertain feet and frantic gestures, while we ploughed on behind her through the lush of the wood in July. It was an amazingly hot day; the press for the last week or so had been full of surprise and congratulation as to the amazingly hot days we were having, and we had now an unrivalled opportunity of testing the veracity of the press, but we would much rather have forgone it. At that moment, following that little old woman up that tangled path in Carmion

Wood, George Tarlyon and I were probably the wettest men in England outside of a swimming-bath.

'What the devil is it all about?' muttered Tarlyon, and was not soothed by my suggesting that I thought it was all part of his idea of a short cut to Malmanor—while the little old woman still screamed at us to come quick, quick.

'Quick, quick. . . .' And at her heels we burst out on to a clearing in the wood. The sun lay on that clearing like a carpet of gold.

III

Tarlyon and I stopped dead, and stared. We stared hard. But the little old woman, still screaming to us to follow, ran on ahead to the house. Yes, there was a house in that clearing, a little farmhouse. And the sun lay on it all like a carpet of gold: that is how I saw it. . . .

'Not our business,' muttered Tarlyon, and I heartily agreed that it wasn't. We stood where we were, with our eyes glued on what we saw; and George Tarlyon dug his hands deep in his pockets. George Tarlyon always dug his hands deep in his pockets when he wanted frightfully to take them out.

A man was thrashing his son. I cannot explain why, but we were somehow quite certain that the thing the man was thrashing was flesh of his flesh and blood of his blood. He was a huge man, with a mane of gray hair and a long gray beard, and he had on a bright red shirt. If I close my eyes now I can see the blood-red of that huge bearded man's

shirt, I can see the curve of his great shoulders and the muscles that stood out like lumps of rubber on his half-bare arm as he beat his son with a stout stick. And I can see his little old wife trying to stay his hand, begging, praying, moaning. We heard her moaning, like an old, old bird in pain. And at that Tarlyon started forward a step. . . .

'Steady there!' cried Tarlyon sharply. 'Steady; Beaver!' The cry cut across the sunlit place, the clear cry that has lit for England the darkest corners of the world, and the huge man in the red shirt stayed his cudgel and looked at us. But the little old woman still moaned, and it was quite dreadful to hear that in the summer silence. Ten yards separated us from that domestic scene, but they were yards of bright sunlight, and we could see every line on that patriarch's face. For he was a patriarch. He was the most magnificent man I have ever seen; and Tarlyon and I, not small men, felt withered under his straight look. We stood rooted.

'Friends,' said the old man, and his was the voice of authority, 'you must leave me in peace to drive the sin out of this my son. His mother is a woman, and will pardon everything in those she loves, but you are men and know the one sin that is unpardonable by all men. Go your ways in peace, and fear not to put your own houses in order. . . .'

And still he looked at us, that remarkable old lecturer, his cudgel stayed in the air, his son at his feet; and his voice was the voice of a man who has drunk the vinegar of life, and his eyes were the eyes of a man who has seen Christ crucified. That is why we knew for certain, Tarlyon and I, that

whatever that ancient man said was true, and whatever he did was right. 'Come away,' I whispered.

'You are right. It is your business,' cried Tarlyon across the sunlight—and, dear God, it was! For the thing happened then. We hadn't noticed that the son had crawled from his father's feet. And what we saw was a spade raised high in the sunlight, a spade crashing down and cleaving the patriarch's head like an axe, so that the blood came out of it like the sap of a tight orange. Without a cry the old man fell, and red as his shirt were the stones of the yard beneath his head. The little old woman screamed. The son and his spade lay where Tarlyon's right hand felled him, and Tarlyon knelt by the slaughtered old man. I couldn't move. I took up the gored spade and held it, a silly gesture. My heart beat like a bell in my ears, and I remember there rose to my lips prayers that I thought I had forgotten.

'Quiet, for one moment,' I heard Tarlyon's voice to the screaming old woman. I stared and wondered at my friend, kneeling there on the dyed stones and listening to the heart under the red shirt. I could not have done that. I hate a lot of blood.

Then he rose and came towards me. I hated the dark damp patches on his trouser-knees.

'Quite dead,' he said. 'We must fetch the police.'

Of course, I thought. And together we looked down at the son on the ground. He was gibbering. He had gone mad. 'Drat the boy!' said Tarlyon thoughtfully.

'I wonder,' I heard myself whisper, 'what was the one sin the old man said was unpardonable?'

Tarlyon looked from the prostrate thing to me, and I saw that those slightly frozen blue eyes of his were as miserable as the eyes of a hurt girl. You see, that old man was a very remarkable old man, and he was dead. . . .

'I don't know,' he whispered back. 'You and I, Ralph, and our friends, have become so civilised that we don't know what the unpardonable sins are. We simply don't *know*, old man! We are the world's soft people, Ralph. We are so civilised that we pardon too much—both in ourselves and other people; and we call that being broad minded, but it's really being flabby. But that old man, I'm sure, was not 'broad-minded,' he was as little 'broad-minded' as Jehovah, and there was one sin he simply would not pardon. And we, who are civilised people, do not even know what it was. . . .'

We stared silently at the poor gibbering thing at our feet.

'Better tie him up before leaving,' I suggested.

'Don't you think,' said Tarlyon, 'that one of us should stay here while——'

'I won't stay here alone,' I said abruptly—and I meant it. Nothing would have induced me to stay alone in that ghastly sunlit spot, alone with that lunatic boy and the little old woman and the butchered patriarch. How she moaned, that little old woman kneeling on the blooded stones. . . .

With a silk handkerchief for his ankles and one for his wrists, we trussed the poor boy against the kitchen door. He could not have been more than seventeen or so, and his young face was hideous with fear.

We left the place quickly; but I looked back just

once at the scene, for it seemed to me very strange of the sun still to lie on it all like a carpet of gold. That is how I felt about it.

IV

Swiftly Tarlyon put the bonnet of his car to the direction from which we had come, where lay the town whose name is of no interest.

'How far is it, d'you think, Ralph?'

'About four miles,' I ventured; and Tarlyon proceeded to eat up those four miles as a conjurer eats up yards of ribbon. It perished beneath us, that road, and the roaring cut-out tore the silence of Carmion Wood into a million bits, and may it never have found them again! Neither of us spoke. I was feeling sick.

We reached the outskirts of the town, and a piece of luck saved us from inquiring for the police station; for, approaching us on a bicycle, we saw a blue, helmeted figure, and by the stripes on his arm we knew him for a sergeant of police. Tarlyon pulled up.

'Better leave the bicycle and come with us to Carmion Wood,' he said. 'Explain as we go. Urgent.'

The sergeant looked closely into Tarlyon's face.

'Right, sir,' said he, and quickly gave the custody of his bicycle to a gnarled-looking woman in the open doorway of a labourer's dwelling.

'What's oop over ut Carmion?' asked she.

'You may well ask,' said Tarlyon.

No laggard was that sergeant of police. A grizzled man, with a reticent face. I sat behind and

heard Tarlyon explain. The sergeant said nothing, listening intently, until the end.

'Where did you say the house was, sir?' he asked them.

'I've just been telling you, man! In a little clearing in the wood.'

'Very good, sir,' said the sergeant of police.

Silently we sped to Carmion Wood.

'You see, sir,' said the sergeant, 'it's a powerful long time since I've been here. Folk roundabout mislike the wood.'

'Don't feel very attached to it myself,' grunted Tarlyon. 'Ah, here we are!'

But it was not going to be as easy as that. For when we left the car, at the identical spot where, we were certain, the little old woman had stopped us, we somehow lost our way. We wandered about for some time, up little twisting lanes, down tangled untidy lanes, up no lanes at all: we ploughed through the growth and lush of the wood, like angry flies beating about a crypt to which the sun filtered in tortured patches of light. We perspired enormously—and Tarlyon lost his temper. He had had no luncheon, you understand, and it was now past five; and so he was fluent in the forbidden language. But the sergeant of police was a tough and silent man, he neither sweated nor spoke.

'Where did you say the house was, sir?' asked the sergeant at last: and very amiably, I thought, considering. . . .

'Oh,' says Tarlyon. 'So you've heard me mention a house, have you!'

We stood very still, the three of us, and Tarlyon glared.

'Look here, sergeant,' he snarled, 'if you ask me again where that house is I shall get cross . . . I've told you, man! Body of God, if——'

'Please, sir!' said the sergeant quickly.

'What d'you mean by "Please, sir"?' Tarlyon was well away. It was a very warm day, you understand.

'I mean, sir,' said the sergeant of police, 'please don't swear on the name or the body of God.'

V

Well, we went on . . . and, at last, unmistakably hit the path up which we had followed the little old woman. We followed the path, Tarlyon first, then me, then the sergeant. And then we came upon the clearing, and the sun lay on it like a carpet of gold. We stared. Like idiots, we stared. For, except the sun, there was nothing in that clearing but the rust and bones of a long-ruined house.

You had, of course, suspected as much. You had known that all along. You know all about those silent woods and slaughtered men. You have been let in before, by better men. But it was curious, all the same. . . .

'Is this where you said the house was, sir?' the sergeant's voice came gently.

We turned and looked at him.

'Because,' he went on, 'there's been no house here for more than thirty year. . . .'

'Ah!' said Tarlyon; that was about as much as any one *could* say. And our eyes wandered over the clearing, and we saw, bright against the mouldy stones of the ruin, two silk handkerchiefs. . . .

Even the law was at last affected by the heat, for he raised his helmet and passed a hand over his almost bald head.

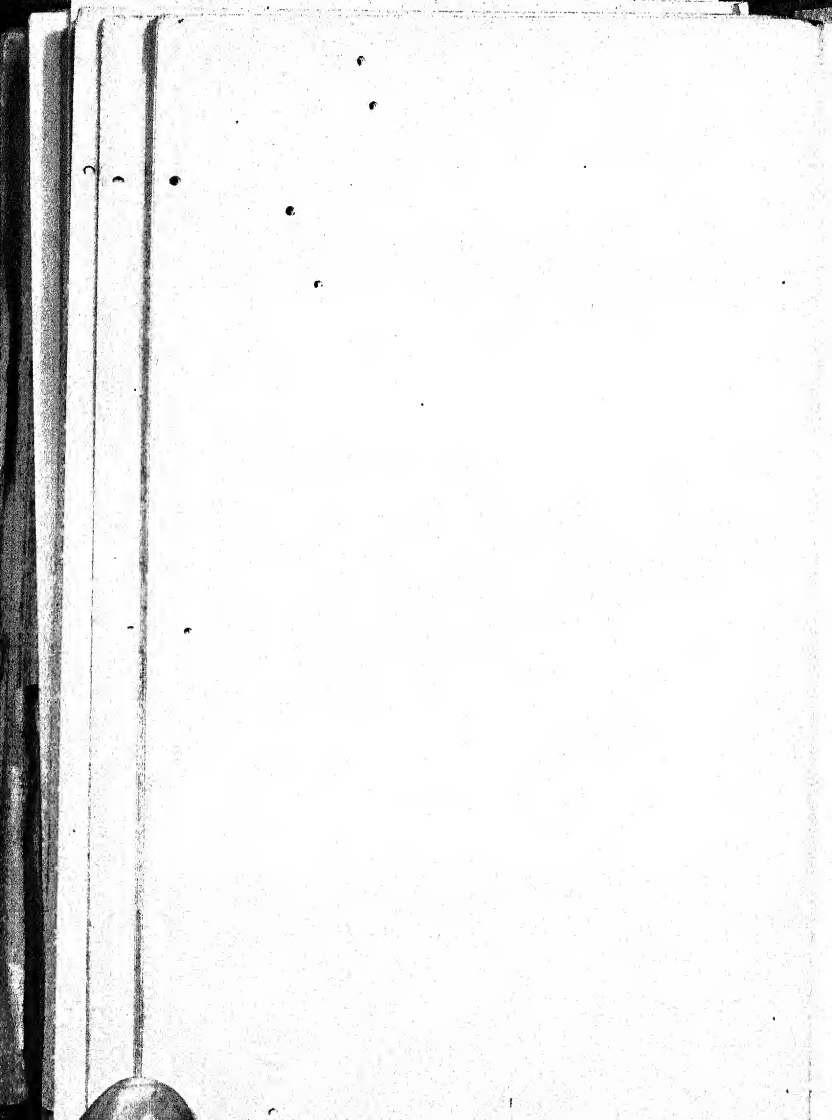
'Yes,' said the sergeant of police. 'There was a house here thirty year ago, but it was burnt down by the men of the neighbourhood because of a great crime that was done there. Parricide it was, but the boy was pardoned, being judged mad, and mad he must have been to kill the best and most God-fearing man in the county. Good-day, sirs. I'll walk my way back. Yours was just an illusion, I make no doubt. The sun, maybe. But it's always had a bad name, has Carmion. . . . Good-day, sirs.' And the sergeant of police went his way.

'Did you see him, did you see his face?' I gasped frantically. For the face of the sergeant of police was the grown face of the lunatic boy we had trussed up an hour before with our two silk handkerchiefs, and they lying where we must have dropped them, drooping over the ruins. . . .

'And he has learnt his lesson,' said Tarlyon, and his face was as still as the gray water of a rock-pool. 'He has learnt his lesson, Ralph—and has taught me one. For the one sin that the old man said was unpardonable by all men is blasphemy. . . .'

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8
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- DOBSON (AUSTIN). At Prior Park, &c. (259). Eighteenth-Century Vignettes. Three Series (245-7). Four Frenchwomen (248). Old Kensington Palace, &c. (258). A Paladin of Philanthropy, &c. (256). Rosalba's Journal, &c. (260). Side-walk Studies (257).

- EMERSON. English Traits, and Representative Men (30). Essays, Two Series (6). Nature, and Miscellanies (236).
- ENGLISH CRITICAL ESSAYS. Selected and edited by *Edmund D. Jones*. 2 volumes. I, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries. II, Nineteenth Century (240, 206).
- ENGLISH ESSAYS, chosen and arranged by *W. Peacock* (32).
— (A BOOK OF), 1600-1900. Chosen by *S. V. Mahower* and *B. H. Blackwell* (172).
- MODERN, from 'MARK RUTHERFORD' to J. MIDDLETON MURRY. Selected by *H. S. Milford* (280).
- ENGLISH PROSE. MANDEVILLE to RUSKIN. Chosen by *W. Peacock* (45). Also a selection in 5 volumes by the same editor; WYCLIFFE to CLARENDON (219); MILTON to GRAY (220); WALPOLE to LAMB (221); LANDOR to HOLMES (222); MRS. GASKELL to HENRY JAMES (223).
- ENGLISH PROSE. Narrative, Descriptive, and Dramatic (MALORY to STEVENSON). Compiled by *H. A. Treble* (204).
- FROUDE (J. A.). Short Studies on Great Subjects. First Series (269).
- HAZLITT (WILLIAM). Characters of Shakespeare's Plays. Introduction by *Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch* (205). The English Comic Writers. Introduction by *R. B. Johnson* (124). Sketches and Essays. Essays on Men and Manners (15). Table-Talk (5). The Spirit of the Age (57). Winterslow (25).
- HOLMES (OLIVER WENDELL). The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table (61). The Poet at the Breakfast-Table. Introduction by *Sir W. R. Nicoll* (05). The Professor at the Breakfast-Table. Introduction by *Sir W. R. Nicoll* (89).
- HORNE (R. H.). A New Spirit of the Age. Introduction by *W. Jerrold* (127).
- HUME. Essays (33).
- HUNT (LEIGH). Essays and Sketches. Introduction by *R. B. Johnson* (115). The Town. Introduction and Notes by *Austin Dobson* (132).
- IRVING (WASHINGTON). The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent. Introduction by *T. Balston* (173).
- LAMB. Essays of Elia, and The Last Essays of Elia (2).
- LANDOR. Imaginary Conversations. Selected, with Introduction by *Prof. E. de Selincourt* (196).
- MILTON. Selected Prose. Intro. *Malcolm W. Wallace* (293).
- MONTAIGNE'S ESSAYS. Florio's translation. 3 volumes (65, 70, 77).
- REYNOLDS (SIR JOSHUA). The Discourses, and the Letters to 'The Idler'. Introduction by *Austin Dobson* (149).
- RUSKIN. (*Ruskin House Editions, by arrangement with Messrs. Allen & Unwin, Ltd.*). 'A Joy for Ever,' and The Two Paths. Illustrated (147). Sesame and Lilies, and Ethics of the Dust (145). Time and Tide, and The Crown of Wild Olive (146). Unto this Last, and Munera Pulveris (148).
- SMITH (ALEXANDER). Dreamthorp, with Selections from Last Leaves. Introduction by *Prof. Hugh Walker* (200).

- SMOLLETT. Travels through France and Italy. Introduction by T. Seccombe (98).
 STERNE (LAURENCE). A Sentimental Journey. Introduction by Virginia Woolf (333).
 STEVENSON (R. L.). Virginibus Puerisque, & Across the Plains (296).
 THACKERAY. The Book of Snobs, &c. (50).
 THOREAU. Walden. Introduction by Theodore Watts-Dunton (68).
 TOLSTOY. Translated by L. & A. Maude. Essays and Letters (46).
 'What is Art?' and Essays on Art (331).
 TRACTS AND PAMPHLETS, from JOHN KNOX to H. G. WELLS (304).
 WHITE (GILBERT). The Natural History of Selborne (22).

¶ *Fiction* (For SHORT STORIES see separate heading)

- AINSWORTH (W. HARRISON). The Tower of London (162).
 AUSTEN (JANE). Emma (129). Mansfield Park (345). Northanger Abbey (355). Persuasion (356). Pride and Prejudice (335).
 BETHAM-EDWARDS (M.). The Lord of the Harvest. A Suffolk Idyll. Introduction by Frederic Harrison (194).
 BLACKMORE (R. D.). Lorna Doone. Intro. Sir Herbert Warren (171).
 BORROW (GEORGE). Lavengro (66). The Romany Rye (73).
 BRONTË (ANNE). Agnes Grey (141). Tenant of Wildfell Hall (67).
 BRONTË (CHARLOTTE). Jane Eyre (1). Shirley (14). Villette (47).
 The Professor, and the Poems of CHARLOTTE, EMILY, and ANNE BRONTË. Introduction by Theodore Watts-Dunton (78). [Life of Charlotte Brontë. By Mrs. Gaskell (214).]
 BRONTË (EMILY). Wuthering Heights (10).
 BUNYAN. The Pilgrim's Progress (12). Mr. Badman (338).
 CERVANTES. Don Quixote. 2 volumes. Translation by Charles Jervas. Intro. and notes by J. Fitzmaurice-Kelly (130, 131).
 COBBOLD (REV. RICHARD). Margaret Catchpole. Introduction by Clement Shorter (119).
 COLLINS (WILKIE). The Moonstone. Introduction by T. S. Eliot (316). The Woman in White (226).
 COOPER (J. FENIMORE). The Last of the Mohicans (163).
 DEFOE. Captain Singleton. Introduction by T. Watts-Dunton (82). Robinson Crusoe. Part I (17).
 DICKENS. Barnaby Rudge (286). Christmas Books (307). Edwin Drood (263). Great Expectations. 6 Illustrations by Warwick Goble (128). Hard Times (264). Old Curiosity Shop (270). Oliver Twist. 24 Illustrations by George Cruikshank (8). Pickwick Papers. With 43 Illustrations by Seymour and 'Phiz'. 2 volumes (120, 121). Tale of Two Cities. With 16 Illustrations by 'Phiz' (38).
 DISRAELI (BENJAMIN). Sybil. Intro. by Walter Sichel (291).
 ELIOT (GEORGE). Adam Bede (63). Felix Holt the Radical. Introduction by Viola Meynell (179). The Mill on the Floss (31). Romola. Introduction by Viola Meynell (178). Scenes of Clerical Life. Introduction by Annie Matheson (155). Silas Marner, &c. Introduction by T. Watts-Dunton (80).
 FIELDING. Joseph Andrews (334). Jonathan Wild (357).

- GALT (JOHN). *The Entail*. Introduction by *John Ayscough* (177).
 GASKELL (MRS.). Introductions by *Clement Shorter*. *Cousin Phillis*, and *Other Tales*, &c. (168). *Cranford*, *The Cage at Cranford*, and *The Moorland Cottage* (110). *Lizzie Leigh*, *The Grey Woman*, and *Other Tales*, &c. (175). *Mary Barton* (86). *North and South* (154). *Right at Last*, and *Other Tales*, &c. (203). *Round the Sofa* (190). *Ruth* (88). *Sylvia's Lovers* (156). *Wives and Daughters* (157).
 GISSING. *Veranilda* (349). *Will Warburton* (348).
 GOLDSMITH. *The Vicar of Wakefield* (4).
 HAWTHORNE. *House of the Seven Gables* (273). • *The Scarlet Letter* (26). *Short Stories* (319).
 KINGSLEY (HENRY). *Geoffrey Hamlyn* (271). *Ravenshoe* (267).
 LE FANU (J. S.). *Uncle Silas*. Intro. *Montague R. James* (306).
 LESAGE. *Gil Blas*. Ed. *J. Fitzmaurice-Kelly*. 2 volumes (151, 152).
 LYTON. *The Coming Race*, and *The Haunters and the Haunted*. Introduction by *F. J. Harvey Darton* (327). *Harold* (165).
 MARRYAT. *Mr. Midshipman Easy* (160).
 MEINHOLD. *The Amber Witch*. Intro. by *J. W. Mackail* (325).
 MELVILLE (HERMAN). *Moby Dick* (225). *Typee* (274). *Omoo* (275). *White Jacket* (253).
 MORIS (J. J.). *Hajji Baba of Ispahan*. Introduction and Notes by *C. W. Stewart*, with Map (238). *Hajji Baba in England* (285).
 MORITZ (C. P.). *Anton Reiser*. Intro. *P. E. Matheson* (299).
 PEACOCK (T. L.). *Headlong Hall*; and *Nightmare Abbey* (339). *Misfortunes of Elphin*; and *Crotchet Castle*. Introduction by *R. W. Chapman* (244).
 SCOTT. *Ivanhoe* (29).
 SMOLLETT. *Humphry Clinker* (290). *Roderick Random* (353). •
 STERNE. *Tristram Shandy* (40).
 STEVENSON (R. L.). *Treasure Island* (295). *Kidnapped*; and *Catriona* (297).
 SWIFT. *Gulliver's Travels* (20).
 TAYLOR (MEADOWS). *Confessions of a Thug* (207).
 THACKERAY. *Henry Esmond* (28).
 TOLSTOY. *Anna Karenina*. 2 volumes (210, 211). *Childhood*, *Boyhood*, and *Youth* (352). *The Cossacks*, &c. (208). *The Kreutzer Sonata*, &c. (266). *Resurrection* (209). *Twenty-three Tales* (72). *War and Peace*. 3 volumes (233-5).
 TRELAWNY (E. J.). *Adventures of a Younger Son*. With an Introduction by *Ethel Colburn Mayne* (289).
 TROLLOPE. *Ayala's Angel* (342). *Barchester Towers* (268). *The Belton Estate* (251). *The Claverings* (252). *Cousin Henry* (343). *Doctor Thorne* (298). *Dr. Wortle's School* (317). *Framley Parsonage* (305). *The Kellys and the O'Kellys* (341). *Miss Mackenzie* (278). *Rachel Ray* (279). *Sir Harry Hotspur* (336). *The Three Clerks* (140). *The Warden* (217). *The Vicar of Bullhampton* (272).
 WATTS-DUNTON (THEODORE). *Aylwin* (52).

¶ *History*

- BARROW (SIR JOHN). The Mutiny of the *Bounty* (195).
 BUCKLE. The History of Civilization. 3 volumes (41, 48, 53).
 CARLYLE. The French Revolution. Introduction by C. R. L. Fletcher. 2 volumes (125, 126).
 FROUDE (G. A.). Short Studies on Great Subjects. Series I (269).
 GIBBON. Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. With Maps. 7 volumes (35, 44, 51, 55, 64, 69, 74).
 IRVING (WASHINGTON). Conquest of Granada (150).
 MOTLEY. Rise of the Dutch Republic. 3 volumes (96, 97, 98).
 PRESCOTT (W. H.). The Conquest of Mexico. Introduction by Mrs. Alec-Tweedie. 2 volumes (197, 198).

¶ *Letters*

- BURKE. Letters. Selected, with Introduction, by H. F. Laski (237).
 CHESTERFIELD. Letters. Selected by Phyllis M. Jones (347).
 CONGREVE. Letters, in Volume II. See under *Drama* (277).
 COWPER. Letters. Selected, with Intro., by E. V. Lucas (138).
 DUFFERIN (LORD). Letters from High Latitudes (158).
 ENGLISH LETTERS. Fifteenth to Nineteenth Centuries. Selected by M. Duckitt and H. Wragg (192).
 GRAY (THOMAS). Letters. Selected by John Beresford (283).
 JOHNSON (SAMUEL). Letters. Selected, with Introduction, by R. W. Chapman (282).
 LETTERS WRITTEN IN WAR-TIME. Fifteenth to Nineteenth Centuries. Selected and arranged by H. Wragg (202).
 SOUTHEY. Selected Letters (169).
 *TOLSTOY. Essays and Letters. Trans. by L. and A. Maude (46).
 WHITE (GILBERT). The Natural History of Selborne (22).

¶ *Literary Criticism*

- AMERICAN CRITICAL ESSAYS. Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. Chosen by Norman Foerster (354).
 ENGLISH CRITICAL ESSAYS. Selected and edited by Edmund D. Jones. 2 volumes. I, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries. II, Nineteenth Century (240, 206).
 HAZLITT (WILLIAM). Characters of Shakespeare's Plays. Introduction by Sir A. T. Quiller-Couch (205). Lectures on the English Comic Writers. Introduction by R. Brimley Johnson (124). Lectures on the English Poets (255). The Spirit of the Age. (Essays on his contemporaries) (57).
 HORNE (R. H.). A New Spirit of the Age. (A successor to the preceding.) Introduction by Walter Ferrol (127).
 JOHNSON (SAMUEL). Lives of the Poets. 2 volumes. Introduction by Arthur Waugh (83, 84).
 SHAKESPEARIAN CRITICISM. (HEMINGE and CONDELL to CARLYLE). Selected and Introduced by D. Nichol Smith (212).

¶ *Philosophy and Science*

- (For POLITICAL THEORY and RELIGION see separate headings)
- AURELIUS (MARCUS). *Thoughts*. Translated by *John Jackson* (60).
- BACON. *The Advancement of Learning, and the New Atlantis*.
Introduction by *Professor Case* (93). *Essays* (24).
- CARLYLE. *Sartor Resartus* (19).
- DARWIN. *The Origin of Species*. With a new preface by *Major Leonard Darwin* (11).
- HUME (DAVID). *Essays* (33).
- REYNOLDS (SIR JOSHUA). *Discourses, &c.* Intro. *A. Dobson* (149).
- TOLSTOY. *What then must we do?* Translated by *Louise and Aylmer Maude* (281).
- WHITE (GILBERT). *The Natural History of Selborne* (22).

¶ *Poetry*

- (For AESCHYLUS and ARISTOPHANES see 'Classics' on p. 5)
- ARNOLD (MATTHEW). *Poems*, 1849-67. Introduction by *Sir A. T. Quiller-Couch* (85).
- BARHAM (RICHARD). *The Ingoldsby Legends* (9).
- BLAKE (WILLIAM). *Selected Poems*. Introduction by *Basil de Selincourt* (324).
- BRONTË SISTERS, THE. *The Professor*, by CHARLOTTE BRONTË, and *Poems by CHARLOTTE, EMILY, and ANNE BRONTË*. Introduction by *Theodore Watts-Dunton* (78).
- BROWNING (ELIZABETH BARRETT). *Poems*. A Selection (176).
- BROWNING (ROBERT). *Poems and Plays*, 1833-42 (58). *Poems* 1842-64 (137).
- BURNS (ROBERT). *Poems* (34). Complete and in large type.
- BYRON. *Poems*. A Selection (180).
- CHAUCE. *The Works of*. 3 volumes. Vol. I (42); Vol. II (56); Vol. III, containing the whole of the *Canterbury Tales* (76).
- COLERIDGE. *Poems*. Introduction by *Sir A. T. Quiller-Couch* (99).
- CONGREVE (WILLIAM). *Complete works in 2 volumes*. Introductions by *Bonamy Dobrée*. I, *The Comedies*. II, *The Mourning Bride, Poems, Miscellanies and Letters* (276, 277).
- DOBSON (AUSTIN). *Selected Poems* (249).
- ENGLISH SONGS AND BALLADS. Compiled by *T. W. H. Crosland*. New edition, with revised text and additional poems, 1927 (13).
- ENGLISH VERSE. Vols. I, II: *Early Lyrics to SHAKESPEARE; CAMPION to the Ballads*. Edited by *William Peacock* (308, 309).
- FRANCIS OF ASSISI (ST.). *The Little Flowers of St. Francis, and The Life of Brother Giles*. Translated into English Verse by *James Rhoades* (265).
- GOETHE. *Faust, Part I*, with MARLOWE's *Dr. Faustus*. Introduction by *Sir A. W. Ward* (135).
- GOLDEN TREASURY, THE. With additional *Poems* (133).
- GOLDSMITH. *Poems*. Introduction by *Austin Dobson* (123).
- HERBERT (GEORGE). *Poems*. Introduction by *Arthur Waugh* (109).

- HERRICK (ROBERT). Poems (16).
 HOMER. Translated by *Pope*. *Iliad* (18). *Odyssey* (36).
 HOOD. Poems. Introduction by *Walter Jerrold* (87).
 KEATS. Poems (7).
 KEBLE. *The Christian Year* (181).
 LONGFELLOW. *Evangeline*, *The Golden Legend*, &c. (39).
 Hiawatha, *Miles Standish*, *Tales of a Wayside Inn*, &c. (174).
 MACAULAY. *Lays of Ancient Rome*; *Ivry*; *The Armada* (27).
 MARLOWE. *Dr. Faustus*; with *GOETHE'S Faust*. Part I (135).
 MILTON. *The English Poems* (182).
 MORRIS (WILLIAM). *Guenevere*, *Jason*, &c. (183).
 NARRATIVE VERSE. Chosen by *V. H. Collins*. Introduction by
 E. Blunden (350).
 NEKRASSOV. Trans. by *Juliet Soskice*. Who can be happy and free
 in Russia? A Poem (213). Poems (340).
 PALGRAVE. *The Golden Treasury*. With additional Poems (133).
 ROSSETTI (CHRISTINA). *Goblin Market*, *The Prince's Progress*,
 and other Poems, 1840-69 (184).
 — (DANTE GABRIEL). Poems and Translations, 1850-70, with
 the prose story 'Hand and Soul' from *The Germ*, 1850, and the
 Early Italian Poets, 1861 (185).
 SCOTT (SIR WALTER). *Selected Poems* (186).
 SHAKESPEARE. Plays and Poems. Preface by *A. C. Swinburne*.
 Introductions by *Edward Dowden*. 9 volumes. Comedies. 3
 volumes (100, 101, 102). Histories and Poems. 3 volumes
 (103, 104, 105). Tragedies. 3 volumes (106, 107, 108).
 SHELLEY. Poems. A Selection (187).
 SOPHOCLES. *The Seven Plays*. Translated into English Verse
 by *Lewis Campbell* (116).
 TENNYSON. *Selected Poems*. Intro. *Sir Herbert Warren* (3).
 VIRGIL. *The Aeneid*, *Georgics*, and *Eclogues*. Translated by
 Dryden (37). Translated by *James Rhoades* (227).
 WELLS (CHARLES). *Joseph and his Brethren*. A Dramatic Poem.
 Intro. *A. C. Swinburne*, and Note by *T. Watts-Dunton* (143).
 WHITMAN. A Selection. Introduction by *E. de Selincourt* (218).
 WHITTIER. Poems: A Selection (188).
 WORDSWORTH. Poems. A Selection (189).

¶ *Politics, Political Economy, Political Theory*

- BAGEHOT (WALTER). *The English Constitution*. With an Intro-
 duction by the *Earl of Balfour* (330).
 BUCKLE. *The History of Civilization*. 3 volumes (41, 48, 53).
 BURKE (EDMUND). Letters. Selected, with an Introduction, by
 Harold J. Laski (237). Works. 6 volumes. Vol. I: A Vin-
 dication of Natural Society; *The Sublime and Beautiful*, &c.
 (71). II: *The Present Discontents*; and *Speeches and Letters*
 on America (81). III: *Speeches on India*, &c. (111). IV: *Writings*
 on France, 1790-1 (112). V: *Writings on Ireland*, &c. (113). VI:
 A Letter to a Noble Lord; and *Letters on a Regicide Peace* (114).

- ENGLISH SPEECHES, from BURKE to GLADSTONE. Selected and edited by *E. R. Jones* (191).
- MACHIAVELLI. *The Prince*. Translated by *Luigi Ricci* (43).
- MILL (JOHN STUART). *On Liberty, Representative Government, and the Subjection of Women*. Introduction by *Millicent Garrett Fawcett* (170).
- MILTON (JOHN). *Selected Prose*. Intro. *Malcolm W. Wallace* (293).
- RUSKIN. (*Ruskin House Editions, by arrangement with Messrs. Allen & Unwin, Ltd.*). 'A Joy for Ever,' and *The Two Paths*. Illustrated (147). *Time and Tide, and The Crown of Wild Olive* (146). *Unto this Last, and Munera Pulveris* (148).
- SELECTED SPEECHES AND DOCUMENTS ON BRITISH COLONIAL POLICY (1763-1917). Ed. *A. B. Keith*. 2 volumes (215, 216).
- SELECTED SPEECHES AND DOCUMENTS ON INDIAN POLICY (1756-1921). Edited, with Introduction, by *A. B. Keith* (231, 232).
- SELECTED SPEECHES ON BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY (1738-1914). Edited by *Edgar R. Jones, M.P.* (201).
- SMITH (ADAM). *The Wealth of Nations*. 2 volumes (54, 59).
- TRACTS AND PAMPHLETS, A Miscellany of. Sixteenth to Nineteenth Centuries. Edited by *A. C. Ward* (304).

¶ Religion

- THE FOUR GOSPELS, AND THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES. Authorized Version (344).
- THE NEW TESTAMENT. Revised Version (346).
- A KEMPIS (THOMAS). *Of the Imitation of Christ* (49).
- APOCRYPHA, THE, in the Revised Version (294).
- AURELIUS (MARCUS). Translated by *John Jackson* (60).
- BUNYAN. *The Pilgrim's Progress* (12). Mr. Badman (338).
- KORAN, THE. Translated by *E. H. Palmer*. Introduction by *Reynold A. Nicholson* (328).
- TOLSTOY. *A Confession, and What I believe*. Translated by *Aylmer Maude* (229). *What then must we do?* Translated, with an Introduction, by *Aylmer Maude* (281).

¶ Short Stories

- AUSTRIAN SHORT STORIES. Selected and translated by *Marie Busch* (337).
- CRIME AND DETECTION. Twelve Stories by EDGAR ALLAN POE, SIR A. CONAN DOYLE, ARTHUR MORRISON, R. AUSTIN FREEMAN, ERNEST BRAMAH, G. K. CHESTERTON, H. C. BAILEY, E. W. HORNING, and BARRY PAIN. Introduction by *E. M. Wrong* (301).
- CZECH SHORT STORIES. Translated, with a Preface, by *Marie Busch and Otto Pick* (288). Nine stories, including two by the BROTHERS CAPEK.
- DICKENS. *Christmas Books* (307).
- ENGLISH SHORT STORIES. First Series. Nineteenth Century: SIR WALTER SCOTT to HUBERT CRACKANTHORPE. Selected by *H. S. Milford*. Introduction by *Prof. Hugh Walker* (193).

ENGLISH SHORT STORIES. Second Series. Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: MARY LAMB to GERALD WARRE CORNISH. Selected by *H. S. Milford* (228).

— Third Series. Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: HAWTHORNE to KATHERINE MANSFIELD. Selected by *H. S. Milford* (315).

GASKELL (MRS.). Introductions by *Clement Shorter*. Cousin Phillis, and Other Tales (168). Lizzie Leigh, The Grey Woman, and other Tales, &c. (175). Right at Last, and other Tales, &c. (203). Round the Sofa (190).

GHOSTS AND MARVELS and MORE GHOSTS AND MARVELS. Two Selections of Uncanny Tales made by *V. H. Collins*. Introduction by *Montague R. James* in Series I (284, 323).

HARTE (BRET). Short Stories (318).

HAWTHORNE. Short Stories (319).

IRVING (WASHINGTON). Short Stories (320).

PERSIAN (FROM THE). The Three Dervishes, and Other Stories.

Translated from MSS. in the Bodleian by *Reuben Levy* (254).

POE (EDGAR ALLAN). Tales of Mystery and Imagination (21).

POLISH TALES by MODERN AUTHORS. Translated by *Else C. M. Benecke* and *Marie Busch* (230).

RUSSIAN SHORT STORIES. Chosen and translated by *A. E. Chamot* (287).

SHORT STORIES OF THE SOUTH SEAS. Selected by *E. C. Parnwell* (332).

SPANISH SHORT STORIES. Sixteenth Century. In contemporary translations, revised, with an Introduction, by *J. B. Trend* (326).

TOLSTOY. Twenty-three Tales. Translated by *Louise* and *Aylmer Maude* (72).

¶ *Travel and Topography*

BORROW (GEORGE). The Bible in Spain (75). Wild Wales (224): Lavengro (66). Romany Rye (73).

DUFFERIN (LORD). Letters from High Latitudes, being some account of a voyage in 1856 in the schooner-yacht *Foam* to Iceland, Jan Mayen and Spitzbergen. Introduction by *R. W. Macan* (158).

FIELDING (HENRY). Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon, &c. Introduction and Notes by *Austin Dobson*, with an Illustration (142).

HUNT (LEIGH). The Town. Introduction and Notes by *Austin Dobson* (132).

MELVILLE (HERMAN). Typee (274). Omoo (275).

MORIER (J. J.). Hajji Baba of Ispahan. Introduction by *C. W. Stewart*, and a Map (238).

SMOLLETT (TOBIAS). Travels through France and Italy in 1765. Introduction (lxii pages) by *Thomas Seecombe* (90).

STERNE (LAURENCE). A Sentimental Journey. With Introduction by *Virginia Woolf* (333).

INDEX OF AUTHORS, ETC.

- Addison, 6.
 Aeschylus, 5.
 Ainsworth (W. Harrison), 8.
 A Kempis (Thomas), 13.
 Aksakoff (Sergei), 4.
 Apocrypha, The (Revised Version), 13.
 Aristophanes, 5.
 Arnold (Matthew), 11.
 Aurelius (Marcus), 11.
 Austen (Jane), 3, 8.
 Austrian Short Stories, 3, 13.
 Bacon (Francis), 11.
 Bagehot (Walter), 12.
 Barham (Richard), 11.
 Barrow (Sir John), 10.
 Beaumont and Fletcher, 6.
 Betham-Edwards (M.), 8.
 Blackmore (R. D.), 8.
 Blake (William), 11.
 Borrow (George), 14.
 British Colonial Policy, 13.
 Foreign Policy, 13.
 Brontë Sisters, 8.
 Brown (Dr. John), 6.
 Browning (Eliz. Barrett), 11.
 Browning (Robert), 6, 11.
 Buckle (T. H.), 10.
 Bunyan (John), 8.
 Burke, 12.
 Burns (Robert), 11.
 Byron (Lord), 11.
 Carlyle (Thomas), 5, 6, 10.
 Cellini (Benvenuto), 4.
 Cervantes, 8.
 Chaucer, 11.
 Chesterfield, 3.
 Cobbold (Richard), 8.
 Coleridge (S. T.), 11.
 Collins (Wilkie), 8.
 Colman, 6.
 Congreve (William), 6.
 Cooper (J. Fenimore), 8.
 Cowper (William), 10.
 Crime and Detection, 13.
 Critical Essays, 7, 10.
 Czech Short Stories, 13.
 Darwin (Charles), 11.
 Defoe (Daniel), 8.
 Dekker, 6.
 De Quincey (Thomas), 4.
 Dickens (Charles), 8.
 Disraeli (Benjamin), 8.
 Dobson (Austin), 6, 11.
 Don Quixote, 8.
 Dryden, 5, 6.
 Dufferin (Lord), 10.
 Eighteenth-Century Comedies, 6.
 Eliot (George), 8.
 Emerson (R. W.), 7.
 English Critical Essays, 7, 10.
 English Essays, 4.
 English Letters, 4.
 English Prose, 4.
 English Short Stories, 13, 14.
 English Songs and Ballads, 4.
 English Speeches, 13.
 English Verse, 3, 4.
 Farquhar, 6.
 Fielding (Henry), 3, 6, 14.
 Four Gospels, 13.
 Francis (St.), 5.
 Franklin (Benjamin), 4.
 Froude (J. A.), 7.
 Galt (John), 9.
 Gaskell (Mrs.), 9.
 Gay, 6.
 Ghosts and Marvels, 14.
 Gibbon (Edward), 4, 10.
 Gil Blas, 9.
 Gissing, 3.
 Goethe, 6.
 Goldsmith (Oliver), 6, 9, 11.
 Gray (Thomas), 10.
 Harte (Bret), 14.
 Hawthorne (Nathaniel), 9.
 Haydon (B. R.), 5.
 Hazlitt (William), 5, 7.
 Herbert (George), 11.
 Herrick (Robert), 12.
 Holcroft (Thomas), 5.
 Holmes (Oliver Wendell), 7.
 Homer, 5.

INDEX OF AUTHORS

- 14
E
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by
- 16
Hood (Thomas), 12.
Horne (R. H.), 7.
Hume (David), 7.
Hunt (Leigh), 7.
Inchbald (Mrs.), 6.
Ingoldsby Legends, 11.
Irving (Washington), 7, 10.
Johnson (Samuel), 5, 10.
Keble (John), 12.
Kingsley (Henry), 9.
Koran, The, 3, 13.
Lamb (Charles), 7.
Landon (W. S.), 7.
Le Fanu (J. S.), 9.
Lesage, 9.
Letters written in War-time,
4.
Longfellow (H. W.), 12.
Lytton (Lord), 9.
Macaulay (T. B.), 12.
Machiavelli, 13.
Marcus Aurelius, 11.
Marlowe (Christopher), 6.
Marryat (Captain), 9.
Massinger, 6.
Meinhold (J. W.), 9.
Melville (Herman), 9.
Mill (John Stuart), 5, 13.
Milton (John), 7, 12.
Montaigne, 7.
Morier (J. J.), 9.
Moritz (C. P.), 5.
Morris (W.), 12.
Morton, 6.
Motley (J. L.), 10.
Murphy, 6.
Nekrassov, 3, 12.
New Testament, 13.
Otway, 6.
Palgrave (F. T.), 4.
Pamphlets and Tracts, 4.
Peacock (T. L.), 9.
Peacock (W.), 4.
Persian (From the), 14.
Poe (Edgar Allan), 14.
Polish Tales, 14.
Prescott (W. H.), 10.
Restoration Tragedies, 6.
Reynolds (Sir Joshua), 7.
Reynolds (Frederick), 6.
Rossetti (Christina), 12.
Rossetti (D. G.), 12.
Rowe, 6.
Ruskin (John), 7.
Russian Short Stories, 14.
Scott (Sir W.), 5, 9, 12.
Shakespeare, 6.
Shakespeare's Contemporaries,
6.
Shakespearean Criticism, 10.
Sheridan (R. B.), 6.
Smith (Adam), 13.
Smith (Alexander), 7.
Smith (J. T.), 3, 5.
Smollett (T.), 8, 9.
Sophocles, 5.
Southerne, 6.
Southey (Robert), 10.
South Seas, Short Stories of
3, 14.
Spanish Short Stories, 3, 14.
Steele, 6.
Sterne (Laurence), 3, 8, 9.
Stevenson (R. L.), 8, 9.
Swift (Jonathan), 9.
Taylor (Meadows), 9.
Tennyson (Lord), 12.
Thackeray (W. M.), 8, 9.
Thoreau (H. D.), 8.
Three Dervishes, The, 14.
Tolstoy, 3, 6, 8, 9, 14.
Tracts and Pamphlets, 4.
Trelawny (E. J.), 5.
Trollope (Anthony), 3, 5, 9.
Virgil, 5.
Walton (Izaak), 5.
Watts-Dunton (Theodore), 9.
Webster, 6.
Wells (Charles), 12.
Wells (H. G.), 4.
White (Gilbert), 8.
Whitman (Walt), 12.
Whittier (J. G.), 12.
Wordsworth (William), 12.

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43124